

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT – TOURISM

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Each year, thousands of visitors come to the Frederick County/Winchester area. Events and attractions such as the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival, the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley, the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historic Park, orchards, farm markets, and historic homes are key assets in bringing travelers to the area.

Currently tourism and travel related business contributes an estimated \$93,503,585 to Frederick County's economy and provides an estimated 1,038 jobs, and \$3,616,084 in revenue in the form of lodging occupancy taxes and food service taxes. The Virginia Tourism Corporation estimates that the average dollars spent per visitor is approximately \$100.

In the last four years, four new lodging facilities have been built in Frederick County, adding to the number of available rooms. The County also continues to lure new restaurant and lodging as a result of present position and future potential in the market.

In the year 2009, international visitation to Virginia increased by 16% with more than 380,000 travelers. This places Virginia as the 14th most visited state by international travelers. The Smith Travel Research, which is the leading lodging industry research company, published its 2010 1st quarter results that show that room demand in the state of Virginia is up 2.3% over 2009. The Virginia Tourism Corporation identified travelers from New York, Washington, D.C., Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland as the top visitors to the state.

As the economy improves and travel increases, it is critical that the Frederick County area be poised to capitalize on the growth in the arena of travel and tourism. The current, jointly funded, Convention and Visitors Bureau is a key component to driving the marketing effort for the present and future effort to draw additional visitors to the area.

The value of travel and tourism's economic impact reaches every citizen of Frederick County by means of providing employment and tax revenues as well as offering a diverse portfolio of local events, attractions and activities that are not only marketed to the destination traveler but, more importantly, serve the local community.

FUTURE FOCUS

First impressions frame the rest of a visitor's experience and most travelers arrive in Frederick County through its roadways. So the character of Frederick County's entrance corridors, especially in areas adjacent to the city of Winchester, is a key factor for the visitor experience and their decision to stay longer. Enhancing these corridors will improve visitor impressions, and will benefit the quality of life for residents.

In addition, the traditional, small-town character that is a distinctive feature of the Shenandoah Valley is a unique asset that is marketable for cultural heritage tourism. Cultural heritage tourism is defined as "traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources." *Source: National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program.*

Frederick County should concentrate on how to increase the County's ability to attract visitors – especially the heritage traveler – through policies and projects that enhance the visitor experience, ensuring that visitors to Frederick County are left with an exceptional memory of their visit, positive stories to share with friends and family, and a desire to return.

Heritage tourists are a valuable demographic to attract because they:

- stay longer - 4.7 nights compared to 3.4;
- spend more during their travels - \$623 per trip compared to \$457;
- shop more – 44% compared to 33% for other travelers.

Source: Travel Industry Association of America and Smithsonian Magazine: "The Historic/Cultural Traveler, 2003 edition.

Heritage tourists are looking for authentic experiences. Market research conducted for the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation in 2007 found that visitors to the Valley who said their visit exceeded their expectations were more likely to have experienced the region's historical sites. Frederick County should continue to create a unique visitor destination, offering authentic experiences that are not available in other communities.

The presence of the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historic Park is another important feature in Frederick County. There are less than 350 national park units nationwide and Frederick County is fortunate to have one of them within its borders. The park can be a key economic driver and a unique cultural and recreational resource for visitors and County residents

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today and in the future. The success of the park will rely on its ability to offer a meaningful, engaging experience for visitors, one that leaves them with a sense of respect and appreciation for the northern Shenandoah Valley's history and exceptional landscapes.

Other tourism opportunities that should be developed in the future include recreation, sports, commercial recreation, and wineries.

POLICIES/IMPLEMENTATION

POLICY: **LINK THE AREA'S VISITOR ATTRACTIONS WITH A TRAIL NETWORK THAT FACILITATES NON-VEHICULAR MOVEMENT FROM PLACE TO PLACE.**

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Work with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission and surrounding jurisdictions to update and improve the regional bike/ped plan, "Walking and Wheeling in the Northern Shenandoah Valley".
- Support the Redbud Run Greenway project to provide a trail network that will link natural areas, battlefields, including the existing five-mile trail on the Civil War Preservation Trust property, schools, and other facilities in the Redbud Run corridor.
- Update and implement plans for a trail network within Frederick County that will connect attractions to one another and to retail and hospitality areas. Such plans may include connectivity among other community facilities such as schools and parks.
- Identify potential projects as candidates for transportation enhancement grants, and encourage the incorporation of segments of the regional trail network into development projects. These projects could be included as part of the Capital Improvements Plan.

POLICY: **PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF FREDERICK COUNTY'S ROADWAYS AND NEW CONSTRUCTION, MAKING THEM ATTRACTIVE AND APPEALING TO VISITORS AND RESIDENTS.**

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IMPLEMENTATION:

- Foster a compact community design that uses traditional building features to help maintain Frederick County's unique historic character to help maintain a sense of place that sets the community apart from other areas in Virginia.
- Strengthen the use of corridor overlay districts.
- Strengthen the effort to focus development in compact centers, using Neighborhood Design guidelines, and keeping the rural, agricultural landscape as part of the visitor experience in Frederick County.

POLICY: **MAXIMIZE THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY THE NEW CEDAR CREEK AND BELLE GROVE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK.**

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Encourage cooperation between the National Park Service, the non-profit partners who operate facilities within and near the park's boundary, the Winchester-Frederick County CVB, and surrounding towns, landowners, and businesses.
- Ensure that the park's historic, natural, and cultural resources are protected as land use and public policy decisions are made that affect areas in or near the park.
- Support efforts to create recreational and public access facilities within and adjacent to the park, such as trails and other visitor services.
- Continue and promote the County's membership in the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park Federal Advisory Commission.

POLICY: **PURSUE COMBINED COMMERCIAL AND RECREATION USES.**

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Identify new areas of land uses that would specifically promote the recreational and open space attributes of the County in conjunction with surrounding localities, landowners, and businesses.

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- Enable the development of commercial and recreational land uses which will provide economic development, tourism, and entertainment benefits to Frederick County.
- Recognize opportunities to create a well-designed conference facility integrated with those tourism related commercial and recreational land uses.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

- The Winchester-Frederick County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- The Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance
- The Quad State Tourism Partners
- Virginia Tourism Corporation
- The Shenandoah Valley Travel Association
- Kernstown Battlefield Association
- Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park
- Belle Grove Plantation
- The Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation
- Frederick County and Winchester Parks and Recreation
- Old Town Development Board
- Top of Virginia Chamber of Commerce
- Winchester-Frederick County Economic Development Commission
- Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation
- The Museum of the Shenandoah Valley.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- National Trust for Historic Preservation's "How to Get Started in Cultural Heritage Tourism" website:
<http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/howToGetStarted.htm>.
- Marketing and Interpretive Plans for the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District
- "Walking and Wheeling in the Northern Shenandoah Valley"
- Winchester-Frederick County Joint Funding Agreement creating the Convention & Visitors Bureau.
- Virginia Tourism Corporation Economic Impact Study 2009.
- Smith Travel Research Lodging Demand Results 1st Quarter 2010.
- Winchester-Frederick County Economic Development Commission.