



WARREN COUNTY

CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2029



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Executive Summary	3
Background	4
Setting	5
Existing Plan Review	7
Planning Process	9
○ Situational Analysis	
○ Local Work Group Establishment and Involvement	
○ Asset Mapping	
○ Public Engagement	
○ Economic Positioning Statement & Development	12
○ CORE Strategic Plan Review & Adoption	12
CORE Strategy and Implementation Plan Strategies/Actions.....	13
Plan Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation	20
Appendix	<i>Separate Document</i>

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The REDD announced the technical assistance program offering Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Planning and Asset Development services in late 2022. Communities from across the state applied to engage with strategic planning services and 34 local governments were accepted to participate. Main Street & Rural Planning (MS&RP) staff, who is responsible for facilitating strategic economic development planning and implementation services, worked with local government staff to communicate the goals of the program, identify local opportunities, and assemble a planning work group. The CORE strategic planning process for Warren County and the Town of Warrenton was combined for efficiency, although separate reports and implementation plans were developed.

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Plan Adoption

Warren County Board of Commissioners – January 8, 2024

Executive Summary

Through CORE, Warren County collaborated with N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division staff members and local stakeholders through a strategic planning process to identify and develop outdoor recreation assets that present economic growth opportunities. Strategy development focused on leveraging outdoor recreation assets to increase tourism, encourage small business development, enhance quality of life for residents, plan for outdoor recreation asset and infrastructure development, and position communities to grow and attract outdoor gear manufacturing industries. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

The plan proposes strategies, goals, objectives, and actions that communities can take to increase economic vitality by leveraging outdoor recreation. For the purposes of this strategic planning program outdoor recreation is defined as all recreational activities undertaken for leisure that occur outdoors, with an emphasis on those activities that involve some level of intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments. Furthermore, other community assets and economic institutions that benefit from or complement the outdoor recreation economy are addressed in the plan.

The plan provides a total of 29 recommended strategies under 5 priority areas, or goals. These goals, identified by the local work group, include:

Goal 1: Increase Outdoor Recreation & Related Small Business Revenue by 5% Annually

Goal 2: Expand & Improve Publicly Owned Outdoor Recreation Amenities by Two Sites

Goal 3: Develop the Outdoor Recreation Goods-Producing Ecosystem

Goal 4: Build a Resilient & Passionate Outdoor Recreation Workforce

Goal 5: Develop Sustainability & Conservation Practices to Protect Natural Resources and Community Aesthetic

These recommendations should serve as guideposts for Warren County as it considers future development efforts and should work in collaboration with other planning efforts undertaken by the county, municipalities, and related jurisdictions.

Background

There is a long tradition of outdoor recreation in North Carolina. From the mountains to the coast and everywhere in between there are incredible landscapes and unique places to pursue a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities. Participation in these activities generates a large economic impact. In recent years statistics show that participation in outdoor recreation is increasing, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. Continued growth in participation leads to the opportunity for the increased economic impact of outdoor recreation, particularly in rural locations where many of the state's outdoor recreation assets are located. Also, there is great potential to expose and engage people that have historically not participated in outdoor recreation activities at the same rate as others. It is important for all individuals to have the opportunity and access to enjoy recreational pursuits, and to have an opportunity to benefit economically from outdoor recreation. These factors, combined with other on-going outdoor recreation initiatives across the state, make it an ideal time to think critically about how this sector can continue to be leveraged to benefit local economies.

Economic Impact

Outdoor recreation activity and associated expenditures generate a large economic impact. This is a broad economic sector that comprises a diverse range of industries including manufacturing, retail, arts, entertainment, and recreation, as well as many supporting activities such as construction, travel and tourism, accommodation, and food service, and many more.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis' Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, nationwide, in 2022, the outdoor recreation economy represented \$563.7 billion in current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP), or 2.2 percent of the United States' total GDP. The outdoor recreation sector of the economy is growing at a faster rate than the overall economy. "Inflation-adjusted ("real") GDP for the outdoor recreation economy increased 4.8 percent in 2022, compared with a 1.9 percent increase for the overall U.S. economy, reflecting a deceleration from the increase in outdoor recreation of 22.7 percent in 2021. Real gross output for the outdoor recreation economy increased 7.5 percent, while outdoor recreation compensation increased 9.1 percent, and employment increased 7.4 percent (national table 9)." Employment in the outdoor recreation industry increased in all 50 states during 2022.

At the state level, outdoor recreation contributed \$14.5 billion in total value-added economic impact to North Carolina's GDP. North Carolina ranked as the 11th highest state in "Value-Added Outdoor Recreation in Total outdoor recreation activities" in 2022. This included employment for over 146,000 individuals that resulted in over \$6.8 billion in total compensation. Employment in key industries within the outdoor recreation sector includes

over 7,600 in manufacturing, 51,000 in retail, 27,000 in accommodation and food service, and over 29,000 in arts, entertainment, and recreation.¹

Outdoor Recreation Participation

According to the 2022 Outdoor Industry Association ‘Outdoor Participation Trends Report’, “outdoor participation continues to grow at record levels. More than half (54%) of Americans ages 6 and over participated in at least one outdoor activity in 2021, and the outdoor recreation participant base grew 2.2% in 2021 to 164.2M participants. This growing number of outdoor participants, however, did not fundamentally alter long-term declines in high frequency or ‘core’ outdoor participation.”²

Studies show that approximately 56% of North Carolinians participate in some form of outdoor recreation each year³. This includes more than 22.8 million visitors to North Carolina state parks in 2021 — three million more than any other year on record. Many parks, national forests, and other public recreation areas report increased visitation as well. These numbers represent a solid base of individuals participating in outdoor recreation and contributing to associated economic activity. But there is still room to engage more individuals and continue to increase participation in outdoor recreation, particularly among populations that have not historically participated in outdoor recreation at levels comparable to others. Also, people increasingly want outdoor recreation opportunities that are convenient to where they live so they can participate on a regular basis without the need to travel long distances.^{4 5}

Setting

Warren County is in north-central North Carolina on the border with Virginia. It is situated approximately sixty miles northeast of Raleigh and Durham and one hundred miles southwest of Richmond, Virginia. Interstate 85, a major north/south limited-access highway, has four interchanges in Warren County. Warren County is predominantly rural and includes three small, incorporated towns — Warrenton, Norlina, and Macon — and multiple unincorporated communities.

¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2022. <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>

² Outdoor Industry Association. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2022-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>

³ The Citizen-Times. North Carolina outdoor recreation is a \$28 billion industry, poised for further growth. October 11th, 2019. <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/2019/10/11/outdoor-economy-conference-asheville-highlights-28-billion-industry/3923846002/>

⁴ Headwaters Economics. Recreation Counties Attracting New Residents and Higher Incomes. <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/recreation-counties-attract/>

⁵ Outdoor Foundation. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. <https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022-Outdoor-Participation-Trends-Report.pdf>

Warren County has a total area of 444 square miles. This includes a total land area of 429 square miles and fifteen square miles of surface water (3.40%). Surface water coverage is dominated by Lake Gaston and Kerr Lake, which account for most of the surface water, and an extensive hydrologic system of creeks and streams, part of the Roanoke River Basin and Tar-Pamlico River Basin.

Topography is classified as having rolling hills, moderately steep slopes along water drainages, and an average elevation of 451 feet above sea level.

The rural character of Warren County defines much of its physical landscape. Historically its economy was driven by agriculture with strong tobacco and cotton production. Today, soybeans, hay, and winter wheat are the top crops, and tobacco still factors into the equation. Livestock also plays a role, with pigs, cattle, and poultry all contributing to the County's agricultural output.

While urban development is concentrated in a few areas, Warren County has begun to experience the pressure of growth. There is a recognition that significant population growth in Raleigh and Durham will eventually spread to the north. Warren County's towns have begun to experience investment both in commercial and residential rehabilitation projects. Additionally, lake-related development in northern Warren County continues to expand despite the lack of municipal infrastructure such as sewer and water service.⁶

Economic Impact – Visitor Spending Warren County

Warren County ranked third (\$63M) in the region for Visitor Spending⁷ in 2021. That's behind Nash (\$301M) and Halifax (\$119) counties and ahead of Vance (\$59M) and Franklin (\$35M).

The breakdown includes Lodging: \$15.75M (*includes 2nd home spending*); Food & Beverage: \$18.52M; Recreation: \$9.41M; Retail: \$5.64M; and Transport: \$13.70M (*includes ground and air transportation*). Airbnb shared a breakdown of total Host income in rural NC counties, and in Warren County the approximate income was \$2,292,000.

⁶ Warren County Comprehensive Development Plan 2022

⁷ VisitNC Data 2021

Demographics⁸ – Warren County

The population in this area is estimated to have changed from 18,642 to 18,317, resulting in a growth of -0.006% between 2020 and the current year. Over the next five years, the population is projected to grow by -0.004%. The median age is 47.5. Five years from now the median age is projected to be 48.6.

Of this area's current year estimated population, 49% are Black or African American, 38.3% are White, 5.4% are American Indian, 4.2% are Hispanic and 0.4% are Asian.

Currently, it's estimated that 40.6% of the population aged 25+ have a high school diploma or equivalent. 19.5% have some college, but no degree. 10.5% have an associate degree. 11.1% have earned a bachelor's degree and 5.9% have a graduate or professional degree.

Per capita income is \$32,277 and projected to increase to \$37,647 over the next five years. Median household income \$43,449 in the current year and projected to increase to \$49,954 over the next five years. Average household income is estimated to be \$75,421 in the current year and is projected to increase to \$86,939 over the next five years. Median disposable income for the current year is \$37,737 and Average disposable income is \$56,907.

Employment status for the civilian population age 16 and over is 92.2% with an unemployment rate of 7.8%.

Retail Snapshot⁹ shows a Total Retail Gap of \$98,356,252 within the 15-mile trade ring which includes most of Warren County. The gap includes full and limited-service restaurants, drinking places, pharmacies and drug stores, family clothing stores and additional categories. The complete Retail Analysis can be found in the Appendix.

Existing Plans Review

To complement and build upon subsequent community planning efforts, staff assembled and reviewed other relevant plans and documents. This review provides valuable insight and helps avoid duplication or contradictions of past planning proposals. The following documents were reviewed and considered during the CORE planning process.

⁸ Esri Community Profile - Forecasts for 2023 and 2028 US Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography

⁹ Claritas, LLC 2023 – 15-mile center from 206 Shaver Rd. Warrenton NC

Kerr-Tar Council of Governments Community Economic Development Strategy

Warren County is located within the Kerr Economic Development District (EDD). The Kerr-Tar Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) identified “Enhance Recreational Assets” as one of nine regional strategies. Recommendations include, creating a regional inventory of all recreational venues and activities; marketing identified opportunities to private developers who operate in the recreational sector; and identify funding sources to support public-led initiatives. The CEDS also identifies “Promoting Small Business/Entrepreneurial Development” as another strategy, which coincides with one of the goals of this plan.

Warren County 2021-2024 Strategic Plan

Warren County’s vision is of *“a diverse, thriving, rural community known for our creative, sustainable economic revitalization.”* The Strategic Plan’s strategies provide a basis for developing Outdoor Recreation as an economic driver: Enhancing Warren’s County’s distinctive economic development assets; Building out the entrepreneur ecosystem; Capitalizing on opportunities to enhance downtown revitalization, and heritage tourism; Advancing agriculture through tourism, farmers markets and events; and complete 50% of Recreation Master Plan by 2024.

Warren County Recreation Master Plan (2018)

The Parks & Recreation Department owns and maintains 179 acres of parkland throughout the County. The County recently acquired a 45-acre parcel adjacent to the Recreation Complex with the intention of developing it for recreational use. There are 3,235 acres of parkland in Warren County that is not owned by the County. Ownership of other park areas includes Town of Norlina, Town of Warrenton, and North Carolina State Parks. Kerr Lake and Lake Gaston are notable recreational features in Warren County. At Kerr Lake the reservoir is managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, and North Carolina State Parks manages campsites and boat access on the banks. Lake Gaston is maintained and owned by Dominion Energy, a private hydroelectric company that maintains the reservoir for energy generation and flood control. Warren County’s Buck Springs Park has a pier that provides fishing access to Lake Gaston, but there is no publicly maintained boat access to the lake in Warren County. There is recreational boat access to the lake through private marinas and private residences.

Recommendations in the 2018 Master Plan include Parkland Goal #3 “Plan for development of future parkland, trails and facilities,” and Programming Goal #3 is to “Expand programming to encourage recreational tourism in Warren County.”

Warren County Comprehensive Plan 2022

Six of the eight goals identified in Warren County's Comprehensive Plan relate to Outdoor Recreation. The goals call for building capacity for new economic opportunities including investment in infrastructure; Stimulating development of new housing with focus on affordable and workforce housing options; Providing equitable opportunities to enjoy an active lifestyle; Promoting the arts, cultural activities, and heritage tourism; and, Prioritizing a safe and interconnected transportation system, including greenways and bicycle facilities. Specific recommendations are found in sections devoted to Economic Development & Agriculture; Cultural & Natural Resources; Parks, Recreation & Tourism; and Land Use & Housing.

Planning Process

Under the REDD, MS&RP Center staff facilitates the CORE strategic planning process with participation from the local government and an established local work group. This work group is comprised of individuals who have a vested interest in leveraging outdoor recreation to enhance economic development. The planning process employs established planning methods including presenting economic and associated data, asset mapping, economic driver identification, SWOT analysis, stakeholder interviews, business questionnaires, local work group discussions, and more. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

Situational Analysis

REDD Staff met with Charla Duncan, Director of Community & Economic Development for Warren County following receipt of an initial application for participation in the *Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)* on November 17, 2022. A Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) and Resolution for the Warren County CORE Strategic Plan was developed by REDD staff and adopted by the Warren County Board of Commissioners at their meeting on February 6, 2023. REDD staff was given a guided tour of Warren County with driving tours of Macon, Norlina, and a self-guided walking tour of Warrenton.

Local Work Group Establishment and Involvement

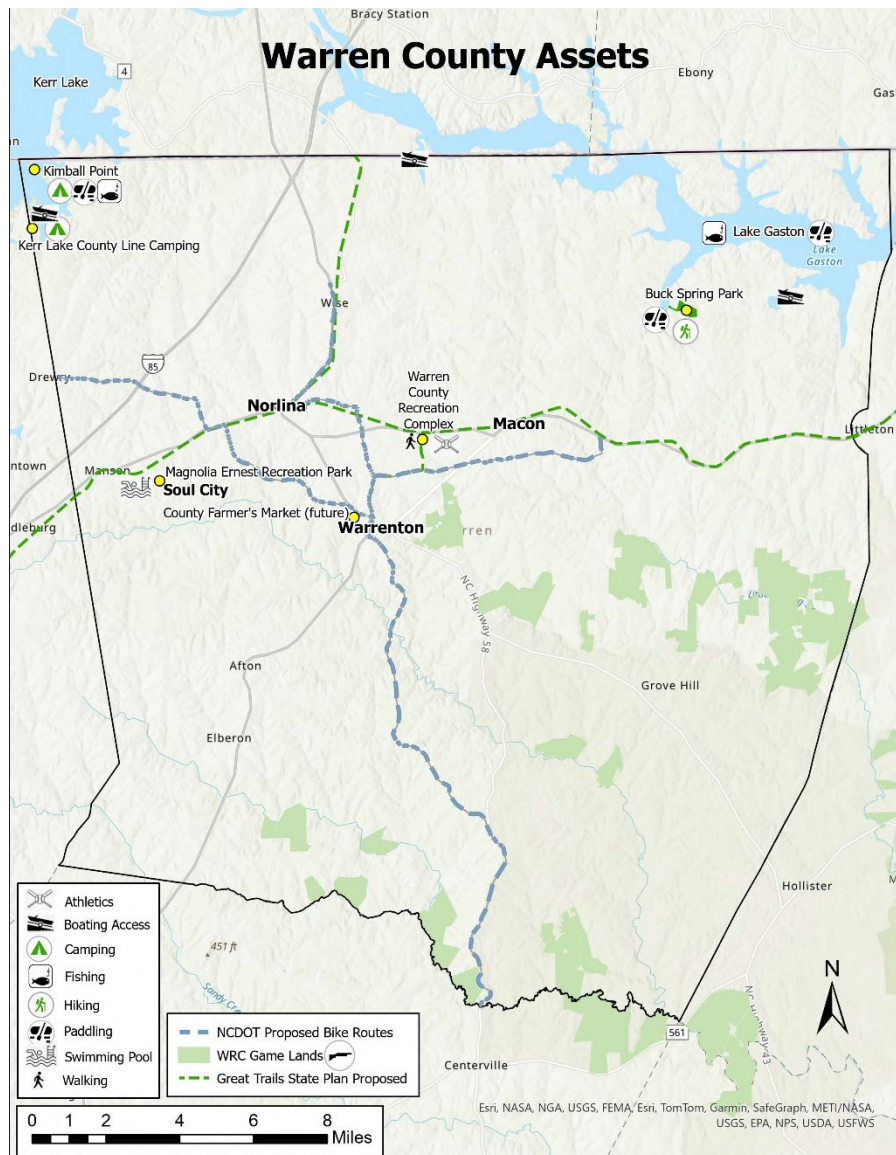
County staff asked community members to participate in the local work group. Beginning in March 2023, the Rural Planning team met with a local work group for a series of four sessions to gather and share information and share ideas. The local work group was comprised of business owners, residents, staff from Vance-Granville Community College, Warren County Parks & Recreation, Warren County Economic Development, a town administrator, and town commissioner. During these sessions the work group reviewed data collected by REDD staff,

completed a Work Group survey, SWOT analysis, economic positioning statement and established goals and strategies for the Implementation Plan.

The local work group will be encouraged to remain as a unit to assist the County and municipalities implement the strategic plan. The County is encouraged to adopt the work group as a standing or ad hoc committee of the Economic Development Commission.

Asset Mapping

The Warren County Outdoor Recreation Asset map highlights publicly controlled properties in Warren County at the Federal, State, and local levels, as well as major trails and waterways.



Public Engagement

We used an online survey to receive input from our CORE Work Group, described above, as well as four 2-hour meetings to develop the economic positioning statement and develop strategies. Additionally, a Stakeholder Breakfast event was held on September 26, 2023, at Buck Springs Plantation to receive feedback on recommended Strategies, Objectives and Actions. There were sixteen people in attendance. An online Stakeholder questionnaire was developed for all invitees with fifteen respondents. The results from the questionnaire will be helpful to EDC staff as they continue to work to strengthen existing businesses and to implement the recommendations. The results from the online stakeholder survey and notes from the Stakeholder Breakfast are included in the Appendix.

Two takeaways from the questionnaire and event include:

- 73% responded to the online questionnaire that local government should invest more local funding into building and supporting the outdoor recreation industry.
- “Vote with Your Dollars” at the Stakeholder Breakfast results



Economic Positioning Statement

A community economic positioning/vision statement provides a forward-looking strategic framework to help guide local government and the community make disciplined, tactical, and incremental decisions on community issues as they arise. The local work group was led through an exercise to develop an Outdoor Recreation Economic Positioning Statement for Warren County.

The CORE work group met several times to develop the proposed economic positioning statement, first by creating individual statements, identifying key words, phrases, and developing a draft statement. A final statement was crafted by the group during its last working meeting. This is the adopted statement:

With nationally recognized year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, Warren County's scenic farmland, clear waters, and open skies have set the scene for generations of memory-making experiences for residents and visitors. Vibrant and welcoming, Warren County is a place for people of all backgrounds to stretch their legs and celebrate their connection to the landscape in a thriving, rural community.

Plan Review and Adoption

The CORE Strategic Plan was reviewed by members of the CORE Work Group on October 10, 2023, and presented to the Warren County Economic Development Commission Board on November 20, 2023. The EDC recommended to the Board of Commissioners that the plan be considered for adoption. The Warren County Board of Commissioners received the report and presentation by REDD staff during their regular meeting on December 13, 2023. The plan was adopted by the Board of Commissioners during their regular meeting on January 9, 2024.

Warren County CORE Implementation Plan Strategies/Actions

Outdoor Recreation Economic Positioning Vision

With nationally recognized year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, Warren County’s scenic farmland, clear waters, and open skies have set the scene for generations of memory-making experiences for residents and visitors. Vibrant and welcoming, Warren County is a place for people of all backgrounds to stretch their legs and celebrate their connection to the landscape in a thriving, rural community.

Goal 1: Increase outdoor recreation and related small business revenue by 5%

Goal 2: Expand publicly owned outdoor recreation amenities by two sites

Goal 3: Develop the county’s outdoor goods-producing industry

Goal 4: Build a resilient and passionate outdoor recreation workforce

Goal 5: Develop sustainability and conservation practices to protect natural resources and community aesthetic

Goal 1: Increase outdoor recreation and related small business revenue by 5% annually

Strategy 1.1: Extend the traditional outdoor recreation season beyond May-September

Objective - encourage new events during October-April “off-season”

Action - create events to take advantage of the upcoming 250th anniversary of the USA - i.e. historic tours, etc.

Action - identify and gather current festival/event organizers to encourage and brainstorm expanded events calendar

Strategy 1.2: Improve Resident Engagement and Participation in Outdoor Activities

Objective - Form task force with local and regional partners to identify and increase youth outdoor recreation opportunities

Action - engage existing outdoor youth organizations such as NC Youth Outdoor Engagement Commission, Need More Outdoors, Great Outdoors University, Great Trails NC, North Carolina Interscholastic Cycling Club

Action - encourage civic groups, senior centers, etc. to promote & utilize county outdoor recreation opportunities in partnership with Warren County Parks and Recreation and local outdoor recreation-oriented businesses

Strategy 1.3: Improve economic impacts of existing festivals, cultural & historical events, and tours by 5% annually; and incorporate elements of outdoor recreation as appropriate.

Objective - Evaluate Current Impact

Action - generate list of outdoor recreation opportunities to incorporate into festivals/events

Action - coordinate with organizers to inventory all county events/festivals & create master calendar

Action - establish baseline attendance & current economic impacts

Resources: <https://sites.google.com/uncg.edu/efit?usp=sharing>

VisitNC - annual visitor spending numbers

Objective - Improve Impact

Action - encourage organizers to develop growth strategies for each event/festival

Action - track impacts annually to determine which strategies are effective

Strategy 1.4: Expand county's marketing plan to include outdoor recreation brand identity

Objective - Determine & promote outdoor recreation brand identity priorities

Action - convene Outdoor Recreation Work Group - with representation from across the county, municipalities, & outdoor recreation sectors - to draft request for qualifications (RFQ)

Action - engage marketing firm with experience in rural outdoor recreation to determine outdoor rec marketing strategy and build out digital content on website, social media

Action - Update and unify signage at all County historic sites

Strategy 1.5: Establish a Tourism Development Authority (TDA)

Action - craft framework

Action - seek Board of Commissioners approval

Action - develop strategy for program administration, distribution of funds, and determination of projects.

Action - establish mini-grant program for marketing and promotion of events

Strategy 1.6: Increase travel related expenditures revenue by 10% annually

Objective - reimagine access to Warren County's rich history through increased promotion, utilization, & protection Resource: <https://www.dncr.nc.gov/>

Action - establish baseline visitor count for each historical or cultural asset

Action - create itineraries, activities, & tours to promote & expand reach of historic and cultural landmarks Partner: VisitNC, VisitNC Farms App

Action - Convert all existing walking and driving tour itineraries to online or app-based self-guided tours (with built-in user data gathering analytics)

Resource: <https://pocketsights.com>

Action - Encourage historically significant structures to be listed on the National Register of historic places.

Resources: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/how-to-list-a-property.htm> & <https://www.hpo.nc.gov/>

Strategy 1.7: Increase short term rental revenue by 3% annually

Objective - Encourage & recruit short-term lodging

Action - prepare small area plan for I-85 interchanges to show ideal hotel placement

Action - recruit & retain a national-brand mid-range hotel

Objective - Support and promote non-traditional short-term lodging opportunities such as farm stays, glamping, RV campgrounds, bed & breakfasts, boutique hotels, etc.

Action - re-visit county accessory dwelling unit (ADU) zoning, etc. to insure proper standards are in place to protect (future) workforce housing stock

Strategy 1.8: Facilitate outdoor recreation activities in partnership among local businesses, Warren County Parks and Recreation, the Warren County School system, and early childhood businesses

Goal 2: Expand & improve publicly owned outdoor recreation amenities by two sites

Strategy 2.1: Expand mountain biking and walking trails by 20+ miles

Objective: Identify 250+ acres to develop 25+ miles mountain bike and/or hiking trails to become trail destination

Action - Establish relationships with state agencies, land trusts, and Homeowners Associations (HOAs) to determine opportunities for hiking and biking trail partnerships

Action - Develop relationship with trail building groups such as Triangle Off Road Cyclists (TORC) & partner to build out trails (e.g. Buck Spring Park, Medoc Mountain State Park)

Objective: Expand Buck Spring Park facilities

Action - Create map of hiking & mountain bike trails for signage and website; edit as trail system expands

Action - Determine parcel & funding for pump/skills track

Action - Determine opportunities for bike and kayak rental kiosks through private/public partnership

Strategy 2.2: Advocate for expansion of allowable outdoor recreation activities within state game lands

Objective: *Determine best practice to encourage utilization of NC Wildlife Resources (WRC) game lands for outdoor recreation (i.e. hiking, mountain biking, birdwatching)*

Action - Engage with WRC to negotiate additional uses and user groups to assist with advocacy

Action - Partner with state agencies to improve signage and access to game lands to encourage multiple uses

Action - Encourage context sensitive design of development near game lands & habitat enhancement projects in game lands

Strategy 2.3: Develop Two (2) Public Accesses to Lake Gaston

Objective - *Investigate potential sites for day use area(s)*

Action - Consult with Dominion Energy, Army Corps of Engineers, etc. to determine ideal site placement

Action - Determine potential property owner partnerships at ideal day use placement area(s)

Action - Identify & pursue funding opportunities

Objective: *Expand lake access from Buck Spring Park*

Action - Determine design

Action - Identify & pursue funding opportunities

Strategy 2.4: Expand Public Access at Kerr Lake

Objective: *Expand kayak & canoe access*

Action - Partner with NC State Parks, etc. to identify ideal launch location(s)

Action - Seek approval from Board of Commissioners (?)

Action - Identify & pursue funding opportunities

Strategy 2.5: Secure funding for 25% of phase 1 of the greenways and trails initiatives

Strategy 2.6: Continue to grow Parks & Recreation outdoor recreation programming and facilities

Objective: *Increase participation in Parks & Recreation programming*

Action - marketing to build awareness of benefits of and proximity to outdoor recreation & applicable county programming for residents

Objective: *Improve facilities to encourage use*

Action - Plan for future development of future parkland, trails, and facilities

Action - Allocate budget for capital improvements

Action - Upgrade safety & access, amenities

Action - Engage in placemaking by unifying signage, site furnishings, and materials throughout park system

Action - Identify and budget for continued park system maintenance

Strategy 2.7: Develop the county-owned community facility and farmers market at 429 W Ridgeway St in Warrenton

Action – No specific actions from this plan were determined

Goal 3: Develop the outdoor recreation goods-producing ecosystem

Strategy 3.1: Increase outdoor recreation business development opportunities by 2 activities per year in partnership with VGCC Small Business Center and other business development agencies

Action - Promote customized training and upskilling resources to local employers

Action - Encourage recruitment of restaurants, breweries/distilleries, outdoor recreation related retail and services

Action - Support and encourage expanded agribusiness opportunities (i.e. agritourism through specialized crops, farm stays, experiences) with programs and policies that center family farms, local food producers, & sustainability

Strategy 3.2: Implement a Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program for Warren County with a measurable focus on outdoor recreation-related businesses

Action - Coordinate with local small business resource providers to educate business owners about outdoor recreation opportunities and coordinate product or service expansion that meets both existing and future outdoor recreation economy needs

Strategy 3.3: Conduct an industry cluster inventory and analysis, as well as a supply chain map for the outdoor recreation industry

Strategy 3.4: Support the expansion and attraction of outdoor recreation manufacturing companies

Strategy 3.5: Target outdoor recreation goods-producing industries in the local economic development incentive policy

Strategy 3.6: Explore alternative financing options and small business services and educational programming

Goal 4: Build a resilient and passionate outdoor recreation workforce

Strategy 4.1: Partner with VGCC to support the expansion of industry-specific workforce development training programs (hard and soft skills)

Strategy 4.2: Market VGCC customized training and apprenticeship programs

Strategy 4.3: Work with local businesses to advocate for and support increased goods-producing average weekly wages by \$300

Strategy 4.4: Work with local businesses to advocate for and support increased service-producing average weekly wages by \$200

Strategy 4.5: Facilitate educational opportunities for K-12 and workforce pipeline about outdoor recreation career and employment options in Warren County

Goal 5: Develop sustainability and conservation practices to protect natural resources and community aesthetic

Strategy 5.1: Promote land management practices that advance the dual purpose of environmental sustainability and recreational opportunities; with an aim to sustain peoples' connection with nature, and enhance human health outcomes

Action: Identify strategic tracts of land that will advance conservation goals and can also be used for sustainable recreation opportunities.

Action: Incorporate/promote "Leave No Trace" principles and educate residents and visitors about these practices. This overall objective can also be connected to the idea of "preserving rural and working landscapes". Also there could be a connection between this, farmland preservation, agritourism, etc.

Action: Quantify the economic benefit of greenspaces, forest, and working lands on the local economy. Build data that promotes and illustrates link between recreation and conservation

Action: Increase education regarding conservation, sustainability, and Leave No Trace principles.

Create messages for local schools, visitors, and outdoor recreation users

Action: Engage youth and other "non-traditional" participants to encourage more individuals/residents to understand the benefits of outdoor recreation and access to nature.

Strategy 5.2: Examine land use policies and promote conservation-oriented development and sustainable best practice in future recreational facility design and construction

Action: Review development ordinances (zoning ordinance; subdivision ordinance) to ensure that they provide a regulatory structure that advances the recreational, sustainability, and resiliency goals of Warren County

Action: Implement recommendations of the Warren County Comprehensive Development Plan (2022) that promote sustainability and conservation.

Action: Utilize sustainable best practice guidelines when building and maintaining recreational infrastructure (trails, trailheads, water access, facilities, etc.). Ex. Required percentage of open space and/or recreational area/greenway

easement dedication for all new major subdivisions. Conservation subdivision standards adopted.

Action: Work to improve and maintain high water quality in Lake Gaston and Kerr Lake

Action: Encourage municipalities to seek designations such as “Tree City USA” to create formal/measurable objectives.

Strategy 5.3: Work to identify challenges posed by severe weather to outdoor recreation destinations and the related business ecosystem and formulate rapid-response business and facilities assistance framework.

Action - research federal and state disaster resources and prepare readiness information for local businesses and parks and recreation facilities

Plan Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Warren County will be responsible for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting accomplishments on the objectives of this plan to the Rural Economic Development Division.

Plan Implementation

Maintaining a dedicated group to follow through after the planning process to begin addressing goals and objectives outlined in this plan is critical to attaining the potential economic impact of these strategies. This could be the same work group that helped develop this plan, or another similar group that is representative of the community and can advance the goals of this plan.

The sustained presence of such a group builds ‘social capital’ within the group that improves their ability to work together and effectively address common goals. Furthermore, a dedicated group ensures continuity from planning stage through implementation, provides accountability to ensure that objectives are being met, and allows the community to react and respond quickly when an opportunity is presented. But this group should not be the sole entity responsible for implementing all the goals of the plan.

Instead, the group should function as a convener and point of contact to connect to other individuals, organizations, and resources to help the broader community achieve these goals. Maintaining a regular meeting schedule will also help increase the effectiveness of the group, and the entirety of the plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We recommend that six (6) months after the implementation Plan is adopted the County Board receive a progress update from the County Manager.

If the County would like the NC Commerce Rural Planning Center to aid or provide guidance in the implementation of any of the recommendations, the County Manager should direct that request in writing (e-mail) to the Community Economic Development Planner for the North Central Prosperity Zone or to the Main Street & Rural Planning Center.

After a specified period, 6 months to 1 year, the Planner and county will determine if the county might benefit from other asset-based, local economic development technical assistance. On the 1-year anniversary of adoption of the Assessment and Recommendations, the Planner will conduct a review of the County’s progress and results.

If the Goals need revisions or adjustments the Plan should be amended by the County. These amendments should also be adopted by the County Commissioners.

We suggest that the easiest recommendations be addressed first and accomplished. The more difficult items will take some persistence, time, and working together by the person(s) or groups responsible identified in for each of the items.

Appendix

See separate document



WARREN COUNTY

CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES
STRATEGIC PLAN
2024-2029

APPENDIX

- Implementation Plan (full)
- Funding & Resources
- Assets, Economic Drivers, SWOT, Unique Identifiers
- Surveys
- Work Group Meeting Notes
- Warren County Retail Marketplace Snapshot
 - Fact Sheet
 - Restaurant Recruitment Fact Sheet

CORE Implementation Plan

Warren County's Five-Year Strategy with Actions

Goal 1: Increase outdoor recreation and related small business revenue by 5%

Strategy 1.1: Extend the traditional outdoor recreation season beyond May-September

Objective - encourage new events during October-April "off-season"

Action - create events to take advantage of the upcoming 250th anniversary of the USA - i.e. historic tours, etc.

Action - identify and gather current festival/event organizers to encourage and brainstorm expanded events calendar

Strategy 1.2: Improve Resident Engagement and Participation in Outdoor Activities

Objective - Form task force with local and regional partners to identify and increase youth outdoor recreation opportunities

Action - engage existing outdoor youth organizations such as NC Youth Outdoor Engagement Commission, Need More Outdoors, Great Outdoors University, Great Trails NC, North Carolina Interscholastic Cycling Club

Objective - encourage civic groups, senior centers, etc. to promote & utilize county outdoor recreation opportunities in partnership with Warren County Parks and Recreation and local outdoor recreation oriented businesses

Strategy 1.3: Improve economic impacts of existing festivals, cultural & historical events, and tours by 5% annually; and incorporate elements of outdoor recreation as appropriate.

Objective - Evaluate Current Impact

Action - generate list of outdoor recreation opportunities to incorporate into festivals/events

Action - coordinate with organizers to inventory all county events/festivals & create master calendar

Action - establish baseline attendance & current economic impacts

Resources: <https://sites.google.com/uncg.edu/efit?usp=sharing>
VisitNC - annual visitor spending numbers

Objective - Improve Impact

Action - encourage organizers to develop growth strategies for each event/festival

Action - track impacts annually to determine which strategies are effective

Resource:

Strategy 1.4: Expand county's marketing plan to include outdoor recreation brand identity

Objective - Determine & promote outdoor recreation brand identity priorities

Action - convene Outdoor Recreation Work Group - with representation from across the county, municipalities, & outdoor recreation sectors - to draft request for qualifications (RFQ)

Action - engage marketing firm with experience in rural outdoor recreation to determine outdoor rec marketing strategy and build out digital content on website, social media

Objective - Update and unify signage at all county historic sites

Strategy 1.5: Establish a Tourism Development Authority (TDA)

Action - craft framework

Action - seek Board of Commissioners approval

Action - develop strategy for program administration, distribution of funds, and determination of projects.

Action - establish mini-grant program for marketing and promotion of events

Resource: Rutherford County TDA webinar

Strategy 1.6: Increase travel related expenditures revenue by 10% annually

Objective - reimagine access to Warren County's rich history through increased promotion, utilization, & protection

Resource: <https://www.dncr.nc.gov/>

Action - establish baseline visitor count for each historical or cultural asset

Action - create itineraries, activities, & tours to promote & expand reach of historic and cultural landmarks

Partner: VisitNC, VisitNC Farms App

Action - Convert all existing walking and driving tour itineraries to online or app-based self-guided tours (with built-in user data gathering analytics)

Resource: <https://pocketsights.com>

Action - Encourage historically significant structures to be listed on the National Register of historic places.

Resources:

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/how-to-list-a-property.htm> & <https://www.hpo.nc.gov/>

Strategy 1.7: Increase short term rental revenue by 3% annually

Objective - Encourage & recruit short-term lodging

Action - prepare small area plan for I-85 interchanges to show ideal hotel placement

Action - recruit & retain a national-brand mid-range hotel

Objective - Support and promote non-traditional short-term lodging opportunities such as farm stays, glamping, RV campgrounds, bed & breakfasts, boutique hotels, etc.

Action - re-visit county accessory dwelling unit (ADU) zoning, etc. to insure proper standards are in place to protect (future) workforce housing stock

Strategy 1.8: Facilitate outdoor recreation activities in partnership among local businesses, Warren County Parks and Recreation, the Warren County School system, and early childhood businesses

Goal 2 – Expand & improve publicly-owned outdoor recreation amenities (by two sites)

Strategy 2.1: Expand mountain biking and walking trails by 20+ miles

***Objective:** Identify 250+ acres to develop 25+ miles mountain bike and/or hiking trails to become trail destination*

Action - Establish relationships with state agencies, land trusts, and Homeowners Associations (HOAs) to determine opportunities for hiking and biking trail partnerships

Action - Develop relationship with trail building groups such as Triangle Off Road Cyclists (TORC) & partner to build out trails (e.g. Buck Spring Park, Medoc Mountain State Park)

***Objective:** Expand Buck Spring Park facilities*

Action - Create map of hiking & mountain bike trails for signage and website; edit as trail system expands

Action - Determine parcel & funding for pump/skills track

Action - Determine opportunities for bike and kayak rental kiosks through private/public partnership

Strategy 2.2: Advocate for expansion of allowable outdoor recreation activities within state game lands

***Objective:** Determine best practice to encourage utilization of NC Wildlife Resources (WRC) game lands for outdoor recreation (i.e. hiking, mountain biking, birdwatching)*

Action - Engage with WRC to negotiate additional uses and user groups to assist with advocacy

Action - Partner with state agencies to improve signage and access to game lands to encourage multiple uses

Action - Encourage context sensitive design of development near game lands & habitat enhancement projects in game lands

Strategy 2.3: Develop Two (2) Public Accesses to Lake Gaston

Objective - Investigate potential sites for day use area(s)

Action - Consult with Dominion Energy, Army Corps of Engineers, etc. to determine ideal site placement

Action - Determine potential property owner partnerships at ideal day use placement area(s)

Action - Identify & pursue funding opportunities

Objective: Expand lake access from Buck Spring Park

Action - Determine design

Action - Identify & pursue funding opportunities

Strategy 2.4: Expand Public Access at Kerr Lake

Objective: Expand kayak & canoe access

Action - Partner with NC State Parks, etc. to identify ideal launch location(s)

Action - Seek approval from Board of Commissioners (?)

Action - Identify & pursue funding opportunities

Strategy 2.5: Secure funding for 25% of phase 1 of the greenways and trails initiatives

Strategy 2.6: Continue to grow Parks & Recreation outdoor recreation programming and facilities

Objective: Increase participation in Parks & Recreation programming

Action - marketing to build awareness of benefits of and proximity to outdoor recreation & applicable county programming for residents

Objective: Improve facilities to encourage use

Action - Plan for future development of future parkland, trails, and facilities

Action - Allocate budget for capital improvements

Action - Upgrade safety & access, amenities

Action - Engage in placemaking by unifying signage, site furnishings, and materials throughout park system

Action - Identify and budget for continued park system maintenance

Strategy 2.7: Develop the county-owned community facility and farmers market at 429 W Ridgeway St in Warrenton

Goal 3: Develop the outdoor recreation goods-producing Ecosystem

Strategy 3.1: Increase outdoor recreation business development opportunities by 2 activities per year in partnership with VGCC Small Business Center and other business development agencies

Action - Promote customized training and upskilling resources to local employers

Action - Encourage recruitment of restaurants, breweries/distilleries, outdoor recreation related retail and services

Action - Support and encourage expanded agribusiness opportunities (i.e. agritourism through specialized crops, farm stays, experiences) with programs and policies that center family farms, local food producers, & sustainability

Strategy 3.2: Implement a Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program for Warren County with a measurable focus on outdoor recreation-related businesses

Action - Coordinate with local small business resource providers to educate business owners about outdoor recreation opportunities and coordinate product or service expansion that meets both existing and future outdoor recreation economy needs

Strategy 3.3: Conduct an industry cluster inventory and analysis, as well as a supply chain map for the outdoor recreation industry

Strategy 3.4: Support the expansion and attraction of outdoor recreation manufacturing companies

Strategy 3.5: Target outdoor recreation goods-producing industries in the local economic development incentive policy

Strategy 3.6: Explore alternative financing options and small business services and educational programming

Goal 4: Build a resilient and passionate outdoor recreation workforce

Strategy 4.1: Partner with VGCC to support the expansion of industry-specific workforce development training programs (hard and soft skills)

Strategy 4.2: Market VGCC customized training and apprenticeship programs

Strategy 4.3: Work with local businesses to advocate for and support increased goods-producing average weekly wages by \$300

Strategy 4.4: Work with local businesses to advocate for and support increased service-producing average weekly wages by \$200

Strategy 4.5: Facilitate educational opportunities for K-12 and workforce pipeline about outdoor recreation career and employment options in Warren County

Goal 5: Develop sustainability and conservation practices to protect natural resources and community aesthetic

Strategy 5.1: Promote land management practices that advance the dual purpose of environmental sustainability and recreational opportunities; with an aim to sustain peoples' connection with nature, and enhance human health outcomes

Action 5.1: Identify strategic tracts of land that will advance conservation goals and can also be used for sustainable recreation opportunities.

Action 5.2: Incorporate/promote "Leave No Trace" principles and educate residents and visitors about these practices.

- This overall objective can also be connected to idea of "preserving rural and working landscapes".
- Also there could be a connection between this, farmland preservation, agritourism, etc.

Action: Quantify the economic benefit of greenspaces, forest, and working lands on the local economy

- Build data that promotes and illustrates link between recreation and conservation

Action: Increase education regarding conservation, sustainability, and Leave No Trace principles.

- Create messages for local schools, visitors, and outdoor recreation users

Action: Engage youth and other “non-traditional” participants to encourage more individuals/residents to understand the benefits of outdoor recreation and access to nature.

Strategy 5.2: Examine land use policies and promote conservation-oriented development and sustainable best practice in future recreational facility design and construction

Action: Review development ordinances (zoning ordinance; subdivision ordinance) to ensure that they provide a regulatory structure that advances the recreational, sustainability, and resiliency goals of Warren County

Action: Implement recommendations of the Warren County Comprehensive Development Plan (2022) that promote sustainability and conservation.

Action: Utilize sustainable best practice guidelines when building and maintaining recreational infrastructure (trails, trailheads, water access, facilities, etc.).

- Ex. Required percentage of open space and/or recreational area/greenway easement dedication for all new major subdivisions. Conservation subdivision standards adopted.

Action: Work to improve and maintain high water quality in Lake Gaston and Kerr Lake

Action: Encourage municipalities to seek designations such as “Tree City USA” to create formal/measurable objectives.

Strategy 5.3: Work to identify challenges posed by severe weather to outdoor recreation destinations and the related business ecosystem, and formulate rapid-response business and facilities assistance framework

Action - research federal and state disaster resources and prepare readiness information for local businesses and parks and recreation facilities

**NORTH CAROLINA MAIN STREET AND RURAL PLANNING CENTER
 POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES AND RESOURCES
 FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION AND OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
 (Revised August 2023)**

*** The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center recommends contacting listed entities directly for more information about their programs. The inclusion of a program on the list is not an endorsement by the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. ***

Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources – The Great Trails State Program	The Great Trails State Program, funded with \$12.5 million each year for two years, will be a competitive grant program for new trail development and extension of existing trails, including paved trails, greenways, and natural surface trails for biking, hiking, walking, equestrian use, and paddling.	Grants	TBD	Information on new program forthcoming.
NC Land & Water Fund	These grants have been used in all 100 N.C. counties to help ensure clean drinking water, protect natural habitat and preserve our unique natural and cultural resources for future generations.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://nclwf.nc.gov/apply
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - The Land and Water	The LWCF provides matching grants to local governments to assist with public park and recreation projects. LWCF grants can	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	An applicant must match the grant with a minimum of 50 percent.	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/land-and-water-conservation-fund

Conservation Fund	be used to acquire land for a public park; to develop outdoor recreation and support facilities; or a combination of both. A project must be located on a single site.			
North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)	Awards matching grants to local governments for parks, public beach access, and improvements in state parks. The statewide program helps local governments reach their park and public access goals to improve the quality of life in their communities.	Grants - The North Carolina General Assembly funds PARTF each year at different levels.	1:1 Match for Local Government Projects; Funds also available for NC State Parks projects and the Coastal and Estuarine Water Beach Access Program	https://www.ncparks.gov/more-about-us/parks-recreation-trust-fund/parks-and-recreation-trust-fund
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
NCDNCR, Division of Parks and Recreation - Recreational Trails Program Grant	The intent of the RTP is to help fund trails and trail-related recreational needs at the State level for projects that are construction ready for grant funding.	Grants – past grant amounts awarded between \$10k-\$100k	Past years have required a 25% Match of RTP Funds Received	https://trails.nc.gov/trail-grants/apply-grant
NC Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Marine Fisheries - Boating Infrastructure Grant	The BIG program is a federal grant program, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, that provides funding to states for the construction, renovation, and maintenance of	Grants - Two tiers: State (up to \$200,000) and National (up to \$1.5 million).	Yes – 25% cost share / match. In-kind services, materials, and other contributions are allowed for	https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/grant-programs/nc-boating-infrastructure-grant-program

(BIG) Program	boating infrastructure facilities for transient recreational vessels at least 26 feet long that are operated, leased, rented, or chartered primarily for pleasure. Boating infrastructure means the structures, equipment, accessories, and services that are necessary or desirable for a facility to accommodate eligible vessels. Transient vessels are those passing through or by a place, staying up to 15 days. Projects completed using BIG funds must provide public access but may be publicly or privately owned. The NC Division of Marine Fisheries is the lead agency for BIG in North Carolina. Both publicly owned and privately-owned marina facilities that are open to the public are eligible to apply for funding, including private marinas, local municipalities, state agencies, or other non-		the cost share / match.	
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	governmental entities. Note: No announcement yet for 2024 grants.			
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) - America the Beautiful Challenge	Intended to streamline grant funding opportunities for new conservation and restoration projects around the U.S., the America the Beautiful Challenge consolidates funding from multiple federal agencies and the private sector to enable applicants to conceive and develop large-scale projects that address shared funder priorities and span public and private lands.	Grants - Approximately \$85 million	Non-federal match helps demonstrate broad support for the project and may be required by the federal funding requirements. Dependent of federal agency funding.	https://www.nfwf.org/programs/america-beautiful-challenge
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Transportation Alternatives	Provides funding for a variety of generally smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities; recreational trails; and more.	Grants	Variable	https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/
U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration	Provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/

(FHWA) – Recreational Trails Program	and motorized recreational trail uses.			
National Forest Foundation – Matching Awards Program	The MAP program supports action-oriented projects that enhance outdoor experiences, forest and ecosystem health, and engage local communities in caring for their public lands.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	1:1 nonfederal cash match	https://www.nationalforests.org/grant-programs/map
US Fish & Wildlife Service - Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program	Programs that distribute funding annually to state agencies and Tribes to manage fish, wildlife, and habitats, evaluate and enhance species of greatest conservation need, and provide recreational opportunities for fishing, hunting, shooting, and boating. Local governments and orgs. may have to partner with state agencies to access these funds.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.fws.gov/program/wildlife-and-sport-fish-restoration
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Acres for America	Walmart’s Acres for America program stands today as the leading public-private land conservation partnership in the United States. The partnership began in 2005,	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	All grant awards require a minimum 1:1 match of cash or contributed goods and services.	https://www.nfwf.org/programs/acres-america

	when Walmart and NFWF joined forces to establish Acres for America as a groundbreaking effort to support and catalyze the conservation of lands and wildlife habitat of national significance, and to benefit local communities and local economies.			
Outdoor Heritage NC - North Carolina Schools Go Outside (GO) Grant	Created to address the main barrier to getting kids outside during the school day – funding. Qualifying for grants require instructors demonstrate how the experience will address topics currently being taught in class and that the experience meets the goals of the Outdoor Heritage Trust Fund plan.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.outdoorheritage.nc.gov/grants/ For questions, contact ohac.grants@nc.gov
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - Accessibility for Parks Grant	Can be used to build accessible facilities or adapt existing facilities that meet the unique needs of children and veterans with physical and developmental disabilities.	Local governments can request a maximum of \$500,000 with each application.	An applicant must match the grant with \$1 of local funds for every \$5 of grant funds. The value of in-kind services, such as volunteer work, cannot be used	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/accessibility-parks-grant

			as part of the match.	
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program	<p>The purpose of the program is to provide grants to acquire and/or develop public lands for outdoor recreation purposes consistent with the purposes of LWCF, but with the further specific goals of funding projects that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are located within or serve an Urbanized Area (population of 50,000 or more) as designated by the Census Bureau from the 2010 Census; and <p>Are in, or are directly accessible to, neighborhoods or communities that are underserved in terms of parks and recreation resources and where there are significant populations of people who are economically disadvantaged.</p>	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	ORLP grant projects must be cost-shared with non-federal funds at a minimum ratio of 1:1.	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/outdoor-recreation-legacy-partnership-program
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact

<p>NCDOT - IMD Feasibility Studies Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility studies for eligible project types including paved trails, greenways, shared-use paths, sidepaths, and sidewalks. 	<p>Grant – Funding Amounts Vary</p>	<p>A local match is not required; however, it may be a factor to consider for a competitive grant cycle.</p>	<p>https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pages/IMD-Feasibility-Studies-Program.aspx</p>
<p>The Conservation Fund – Resourceful Communities’ ‘Creating New Economies Fund (CNEF)’</p>	<p>Resourceful Communities’ small-grant program, the Creating New Economies Fund (CNEF), provides direct investment in community-based efforts. Seed money supports a range of projects: eco- and heritage tourism, youth conservation programs, farmers markets, alternative energy production and more.</p>	<p>Grants - Grants cannot exceed \$15,000. There is no minimum amount that must be requested for consideration, however, grants average \$8,000-\$12,000.</p>	<p>Not Specified</p>	<p>https://www.conservationfund.org/our-work/resourceful-communities/grants-and-other-resources</p>
<p>Program</p>	<p>Purpose/Description</p>	<p>Grants/Resources</p>	<p>Match</p>	<p>Website/Contact</p>
<p>Athletic Brewing Co. – Two for the Trails</p>	<p>ABC donates 2% of sales to protect and restore trails, and other projects that enhance access to the outdoors. Any registered LLC eligible, with preference given to 501(c)(3) non-profits.</p>	<p>Grant – Funding Amounts Vary</p>	<p>Not specified</p>	<p>https://athleticbrewing.com/pages/two-for-the-trails</p>
<p>Fox Factory Trail Trust</p>	<p>Provide grants to organizations helping to preserve the places we love to play. The goal is to</p>	<p>Grant – Funding Amounts Vary</p>	<p>Not Specified</p>	<p>https://www.trailtrust.com/</p>

	bring together diverse communities to build, maintain, and expand access to trails for both mountain biking and power sports. 501(c)(3) Non-Profits eligible.			
NCDEQ – Water Resources Development Grant Program	This program provides cost-share grants and technical assistance to local governments in NC. Applications for grants are accepted for 7 eligible project types: general navigation, recreational navigation, water management, stream restoration, water-based recreation, Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) stream restoration projects and feasibility/engineering studies.	Grant – Funding Amounts Vary depending on project type - \$200,000 maximum recommended for “State & Local Projects”	50 percent matching limit	https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-grants/water-resources-development-grant-program
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
T-Mobile Hometown Grants program	T-Mobile is committing up to \$25 million over the next 5 years to support small towns across America by funding community projects. Program will help fund	Grants – maximum \$50k per town	Not specified	https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants

	projects to build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in your town. For example, this might include the town square pavilion, a historic building, an outdoor park, a ball field, etc.			
NCDEQ – Div. of Coastal Management - Coastal Management Beach & Waterfront Access Program	Provides matching grants to local governments for projects to improve pedestrian access to the state's beaches and waterways. Eligible applicants include local governments in the 20 coastal counties and their municipalities that have public trust waters (ocean, estuarine or riverine waters) within their jurisdictions.	Grants	Local Match Required	https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/coastal-management/coastal-management-beach-waterfront-access-program/beach-waterfront-access-grants
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program	The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program supports bicycle infrastructure projects and targeted initiatives that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to ride. PeopleForBikes accepts grant applications from	Grants - up to \$10,000	Do not require a specific % match, but do look at leverage and funding partnerships very carefully. We will not consider grant requests in	https://www.peopleforbikes.org/grant-guidelines

	non-profit organizations with a focus on bicycling, active transportation or community development; from city or county agencies or departments and from state or federal agencies working locally.		which PFB funding would amount to 50% or more of the project budget.	
North Carolina Community Foundation	The North Carolina Community Foundation (NCCF) is the only statewide community foundation serving North Carolina and has administered over \$243 million in grants since 1988. With more than \$440 million in assets, NCCF sustains over 1,200 endowments and partners with a network of affiliates to award grants and scholarships in communities across the state.	Grants	Each grant resource administered by the NCCF will have different specifications.	https://www.nccommunityfoundation.org/
Occupancy Tax used for non-marketing purposes	Will be dependent of legislation that dictates how local occupancy tax dollars are allocated.	Tax	n/a	Consult local Tourism Development Authority or comparable board regarding how local occupancy tax funds are collected and allocated.
USDA-RD - Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program	This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential	Grants and Loans	Varying match rates dependent upon various factors	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/nc

	community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area. Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and / or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment and pay related project expenses.			
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
East Coast Greenway Alliance - Complete the Trails Program	The Alliance is seeking proposals for trail projects that can successfully apply CTP funding towards expanding the East Coast Greenway State Trail. This grant is for the purpose of planning, construction, promotion, and maintenance of component trails of the North Carolina Trails System.	Grant	Not Specified	https://www.greenway.org/complete-the-trails-nc
Project Fit for America	Project Fit for America is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works at the	For the fee listed, Project Fit for America will provide outdoor	N/A	https://projectfitamerica.org/pfa-program-summary/

	grassroots level with schools and frontline educators to create new opportunities for kids to be active, fit, and healthy as part of the everyday school experience. The organization works with communities to bring in funding, equipment, teacher training, curriculum, and the resources schools need to get kids fit and foster a love of movement. The total funding required to sponsor a two-year pilot and model school program is \$18,206.	and indoor play equipment, lesson plan support materials, curriculum, and more.		
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
Hydro Flask® Parks for All	Parks for All supports the development, maintenance, and accessibility of public green spaces so people everywhere can live healthier, happier, and more fulfilled lives. Through Parks for All, Hydro Flask®, in partnership with the Outdoor Foundation, offers grants and	Grants and product donations	Not specified.	https://www.hydroflask.com/parks-for-all

	<p>product donations (insulated stainless steel drink bottles with the Parks for All logo) to nonprofits dedicated to building, restoring, maintaining, or providing access to parks and recreational public lands and/or beaches and coastal areas. Note: Application deadline for product donations is April 30, 2023. Cash grant application round will open August 2023</p>			
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC)	<p>RTC's Trail Grants program helps organizations and government agencies accelerate their trail network plans. The program is open to non-profit organizations as well as state, regional, local or tribal agencies working to support, develop and activate local and regional trail networks.</p>	<p>Grants – Funding Amounts Vary</p>	<p>Not Specified</p>	<p>https://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/grants/</p>
Community Development Block Grant – Neighborhood Revitalization	<p>Infrastructure and public improvements that support existing housing in the designated area (e.g., streets,</p>	<p>Grants – Maximum \$950k</p>	<p>The CDBG-NR Program does not have a matching fund requirement.</p>	<p>https://www.commerce.nc.gov/about-us/divisions-programs/rural-economic-development-division/community-development-block-grants-cdbg</p>

Program (CDBG – NR)	sidewalks/pedestrian ways, curbs and gutters, parks, playgrounds, greenways, water and sewer lines, flood and drainage improvements, and trees).			

In addition to the above list, the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) in partnership with Oregon State University has compiled a list of national outdoor recreation funding and technical assistance resources. Some resources may be duplicated between the MS&RP and ORR resource guides. The inclusion of a program on the list is not an endorsement by the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. This list of resources is available via the below link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ucp7AQQQTHa8x0eWYL-ID53AvJU628dE/view>

Community assets	Natural Assets	Institutional Assets
Armory Field	Buck Spring Park	Haliwa Saponi Tribe
Buck Springs Park	Fishing Creek	Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce*
Farm tours	Heritage Tobacco Trail	Town of Norlina
Fishing Creek	Kerr Lake State Recreation Area	Town of Warrenton*
Haliwa Saponi Tribe	Lake Gaston	Vance-Granville Community College*
Hayley Haywood Park	Medoc Mountain State Park (Halifax)	Warren County Economic Development Commission*
Kerr Lake (Kimball Point)	Roanoke Canal Trail	Warren County Public Schools
Lake Gaston	State Game Land	
Medoc Mountain State Park		
Pickleball		
Recreation Complex		
State Game Land		
Volleyball Court Outdoor		

Human Resource Assets

Farmers Market

NC State Cooperative Extension

Ride de Vine

Springfest (TBD Eastern Bluebird Fest)

Warren County Parks & Recreation

Economic Drivers

Breweries/Distilleries (*Bragging Rooster, Mill Hill*)

Fishing

Hunting

I-85

Kerr Lake

Kerr-Tar Council of Governments

Lake Gaston

Lake Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce

Local Outdoor Outfitters (*Lake Gaston Outfitters, Bill's Marine, Overby Marine, AF Wake, Lake Gaston Jet Ski, Lake Country Marine, Poplar Pointe Marine, South Pointe Marina, Eaton Ferry Marina, Buchanon's Store*)

Pickleball

Restaurants (*Waters View Restaurant, The Pointe Restaurant, Lake Gaston Pizza*)

Ride de Vine (warrenton)

Vance-Granville Community College Small Business Center

Warrenton Downtown Development Association

SWOT

Opportunities - External	Threats - External
Existing local facilities must be expanded and new ones created	Funding
More opportunities to get outdoors and higher visibility for current opportunities to do so.	Lake Gaston limitations (access) set by Dominion Energy & US Army Corp of Engineers
Overall infrastructure improvements (septic/sewer, road improvements)	Competing interests between motorized & non-motorized activity on Lake Gaston
Public access to the lakes	
Marketing & Partnerships	
Apprenticeship Programs	
Astronomy - Star gazing (Dark Sky)	
Progressivley Preserve	
Public buy-in	
Community College partnership	
Entrepreneur Camp	
Cooperative Extension Cultural/Historical Resources Map	
Farmers Market Expansion - Walking Trails	
Guide Services	
Historic Walking Tours/Trails	
Light manufacturing	
Mutlimodal Path Feasibility Study	
Public Schools property for trail & pump track potential	
Mounted archery group	
Rail trail potential	
Retail	
Restaurants	
Triangle Off-Road Cyclists (TORC)	
Youth participation/engagement (National Interscholastic Cycling Association NICA)	

Unique Identifier

Access to Kerr Lake & Gaston Lake recreation

Arts community

Buck Spring Spark - cultural & historic

Ed Fitt's contributions

Friendly people

Green spaces

Haliwa-Saponi Tribe

Historic homes and buildings

Historical town

History

History and "small town charm" of Warrenton & Littleton

History of the area

History of Warren County & Warrenton

Lake Gaston

Lakes span two states

Littleton-Lake Gaston Festival

Nathaniel Macon/Macon's Grave

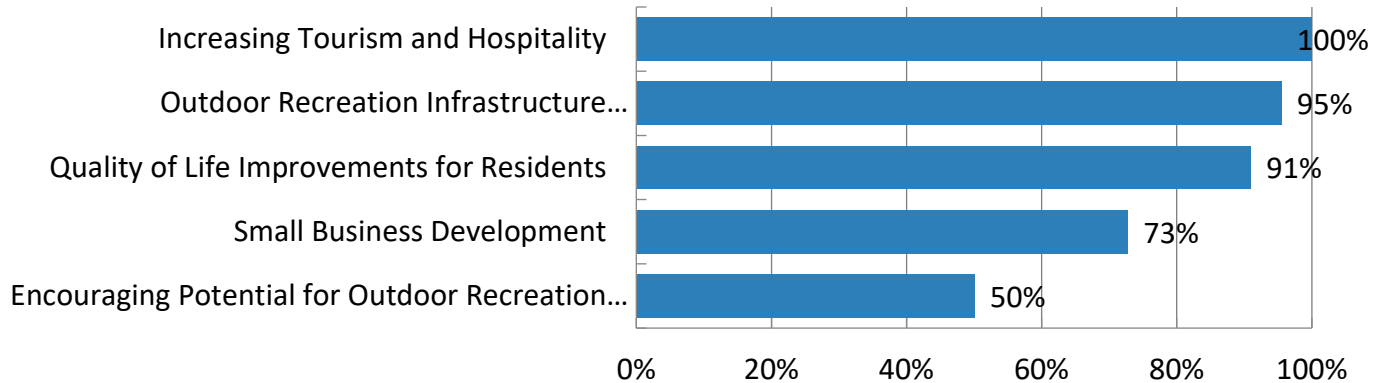
One complex including outdoor pool, basketball court, and trail / Lake, recreation complex that can be connected to the three main towns with development of sidewalks, biking paths

Retirement community/melting pot

Rural and agrarian community

Warren County/Warrenton CORE Primary Planning Group Questionnaire Results 3/31/23

Primary Topics to Address During Strategic Planning Process



2) What are the most significant outdoor recreation assets (parks, trails, bodies of water, other) in your community.

Buck Spring Park

- Hiking
- Mountain biking

Farmers Market

Farms

- Farm tours

Fishing Creek

High Bridge Trail

- Cycling

Kerr Lake

Lake Gaston

- Power boating

Medoc Mountain State Park

Roanoke Canal Trail

State Game Land

- Hiking
- Mountain biking

Tobacco Heritage Trail

- Cycling

Warren County Recreation Complex
Magnolia Ernest Recreation Complex
Armory Field

3. What outdoor recreation activities are most common in your community?

Motorized Boating	100%
Fishing	100%
Hunting	83%
Canoeing/Kayaking	67%
Hiking/Walking	50%
Road Cycling and Leisure	50%
Camping (RV/Tent/Etc.)	50%
Horseback Riding	33%
ATV/Off Road Vehicle	33%
Mountain Biking	0%
Birdwatching/Nature Viewing	0%
Disc Golf	0%
Other	33%

- a. Water sports (wakeboarding, water skiing, waker surfing, etc.)
- b. Pickleball, tennis, outdoor pool

4. What outdoor recreation activities are not available in your community that you would like to have available?

Birdwatching/Nature viewing	83%
Hiking/ Walking	50%
Road Cycling and Leisure	50%
Mountain Biking	50%
Disc Golf	33%
Canoeing/Kayaking	17%
Horseback Riding/Equestrian	17%
Other	17%

- a. Gravel biking

Camping	0%
Motorized Biking	0%
Fishing	0%
Hunting	0%
ATV/Off Road Vehicle	0%

5. In your view, which outdoor recreation activities provide the most economic impact, or have the potential to provide increased economic impact, in your community?

- A. Engaging with the lake, in whatever capacity - be it on a SUP, in a kayak or canoe, or in a motorboat.
- B. Water sports, cycling, fishing
- C. Mountain biking - Research shows MTB generates the highest economic impact for a community. Ex: [SORBA Report](#)
- D. Lake activities (fishing, camping, boating)
- E. Hunting, Fishing, Walking
- F. Outdoor Recreation Tournaments, Kayaking, Horseback Riding, Disc Golf

6. When thinking about outdoor recreation in your community, what improvements are needed to enhance outdoor recreation assets/infrastructure?

List needed improvements from most impactful to least impactful: For example: Is there an existing trail or water access point that needs parking/trailhead improvements? Is there an existing trail or park that could be better connected to the downtown business district? Is their adequate public access to local bodies of water?

- A. Better and additional public lake access on Lake Gaston, more trails (e.g. rails to trails type projects)
- B. Public access to Lake Gaston, lodging
- C. There are MTB trails at Medoc Mtn SP (Halifax County) and Buck Spring Park, but both trail systems lack critical mass to draw riders and are not located near enough to a town to generate economic impact. There is demand, but no greenway paths to offer safe road cycling. The abandoned Gaston-Raleigh railroad and Warrenton railroad are perfect opportunities to bring road (or gravel) cyclists to the county.
- D. Marketing
- E. Formal inventory of all assets in County with public access, ADA Canoe Kayak Launch Access, additional kayak access/opportunities in different parts of County including equipment access, signage/exposure to existing assets, development of trails-walking and biking, improvements to existing outdoor recreation courts as well as adding amenities to those courts, public equestrian facility, adding 6-8 outdoor tennis/pickleball courts in one location, ATV trails, disc golf course development.

7. Rank the importance of benefits to be gained from your community’s outdoor recreation assets and experiences. Please select the level of importance for each topic area.

Topic	Less Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Most Important
Increasing revenue for existing businesses	0%	17%	33%	50%
Attracting new business or industry	0%	0%	33%	67%
Encouraging local entrepreneurship around outdoor recreation-related businesses	0%	0%	50%	50%
Workforce development to prepare individuals to in outdoor recreation	0%	0%	83%	17%
Greater quality of life and amenities for residents	0%	33%	17%	50%
Increased traditional overnight lodging options	0%	50%	0%	50%
Increased non-traditional overnight lodging options (AirBnB;Campgrounds)	0%	50%	33%	17%

8. What are the local features that make your community unique? *These could be related to outdoor recreation such as unique geographic features, activities available that are not available elsewhere. Or, cultural or historical in nature such as a quaint downtown, important local history, an annual festival or event, a famous person from the area, etc. List all that apply:*

- A. History of area, lakes, proudly rural & agrarian community.
- B. Haliwa-Saponi tribe, local lakes being in two states, Littleton-Lake Gaston festival, Ed Fitts's contributions, arts community, retirement community/melting pot
- C. Lots of history and 'small town charm' in towns of Warrenton & Littleton; Lake Gaston; Nathaniel Macon/Macon's Grave/Buck Spring Park - cultural & historic
- D. Access to Kerr and Gaston Lake recreation, history of Warren County and Warrenton, historic homes, and buildings
- E. Green Spaces. Historical Town. Friendly People.
- F. Outdoor pool, tennis court, basketball court, and trail all in one complex(potential for water access), lake, recreation complex that can be connected to the three main towns with development of sidewalks/biking baths, history

9. Are there any other improvements that could be made locally to enhance the quality, accessibility, or otherwise improve the experience of residents' and visitors' ability to engage in outdoor recreation within your community?

- A. More opportunities to get outdoors and higher visibility for current opportunities to do so.
- B. Public access to the lakes, overall infrastructure improvements (sept/sewer, road improvements)
- C. Existing local facilities must be expanded and new ones created. Current facilities are too small to generate economic impact. Existing facilities attract residents looking for a 'distraction', even local residents travel to other counties or states to enjoy a full outdoor experiences like hiking, cycling, gravel riding, mountain biking, or kayaking (and spend their \$ there). \$28B is spent in NC annually on outdoor rec - little or none in Warren County:
<https://edpnc.com/industries/orec/>
- D. Marketing. Government endorsement and involvement.
- E. ADA Canoe Kayak Launch, signage to make access identifiable as well as market, educational opportunities both passive and active to promote use of assists, development of workforce in outdoor recreation

10. When thinking about general tourism in your community what are the main tourist attractions? *These could be outdoor recreation related, or other attractions such as historical sites, museums, restaurants, art, etc. Please list all that apply:*

- A. Kerr Lake, Lake Gaston, Game Lands, Lakeland Cultural Arts Center, Cherry Hill, antebellum historical sites.
- B. Lake Gaston, Kerr Lake, Lakeland Cultural Arts Center, Historic sites (Warren and neighboring counties), Bigfoot Museum
- C. Lake Gaston, LCAC
- D. Lakes, local restaurants, historic sites
- E. Multiple Historical locations throughout such as historical houses, and museums, Whistlestop in Norlina across from historical railcar, lake Gaston, July 4 event, Cantaloupe Festival in Ridgeway, etc.

11. When thinking about general tourism in your community, what are the first two activities that come to mind?

- A. Historical touring, lake activities
- B. Water sports, fishing
- C. Lake Gaston, LCAC
- D. Kerr Lake and Gaston Lake
- E. Being outside of the rat race. Relaxation.
- F. Lake Gaston and Historical Houses in Warrenton

12. When thinking about general tourism in your community, what are the first two potential issues/problems that come to mind?

- A. Not a lot of infrastructure, not a lot of destinations tailored for "general tourism"
- B. Accessibility and lodging
- C. Infrastructure, dining
- D. Access to the lakes for those without transportation, up-keep of parks around the lakes
- E. Lack of amenities.... need enough things to do within a weekend to make tourists feel like the trip is worth it. Nighttime options not related to drinking.
- F. Lack of hotel and adequate signage

13. Do you believe that tourism is an important part of the community's economy? (Select one option)

YES – 83%

NO – 0%

Not Sure – 17%

14. Is tourism generally viewed favorably within the community? In the question below please describe why or why not?

YES – 83%

NO – 0%

Not Sure – 17%

15. As a follow up to the question above, please describe why tourism is or is not viewed favorably within the community.

- a. Tourism stimulates an otherwise rural, socioeconomically insecure region
- b. Lake Gaston is the economic driver for the region, but only for a few weeks of the year. Additional tourism drivers are required to create growth and business sustainability
- c. Helps the economy, others come to community and expend funds/ helps the economy
- d. We need an influx of capital to support what we want.
- e. The growth of local business and strategic planning steps of Warren County demonstrate that

16. Should your community leaders take active steps to increase tourism within your community? In the question below please describe why or why not?

YES – 100%

NO – 0%

Not Sure – 0%

17. As a follow-up to the question above, please describe why community leaders should or should not actively try to increase tourism.

- A. Tourism leads to increased spending, which can lead to many quality of life enhancements for residents if handled properly. (i.e. residents aren't priced out of their own neighborhoods)
- B. tourism dollars can help lift a financial tax burden on local residents in an overall socioeconomic insecure region.
- C. Warren county population is forecast to continue to decrease. Rather than focus on the next business to locate in the county that may bring a few jobs, historically temporary at best, recreational tourism is a forever economic impacter for generations, fostering small business growth and new businesses organically

<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/biking/how-mountain-biking-saving-small-town-usa/>

D. Yes they should increase the marketing of what Warren County has to offer. Warren is not that far from Raleigh/Durham. Others should be curious about what we have to offer in small town/rural area

E. Capital.

F. To have positive increase in tourism it should be strategically planned and developed by community leaders

18. Do you feel that your community is an attractive, welcoming, and desirable place for visitors/tourists?

YES – 100%

NO – 0%

Not Sure – 0%

19. Based on your response above, why do you feel your community is or is not an attractive, welcoming, and desirable place for visitors?

A. Beautiful countryside, two lakes, and lots of history; and only an hour from Raleigh and Durham so a great weekend getaway destination.

B. history, the charm of small towns, the lakes

C. Towns of Warrenton & Littleton have small town charm and while not a destination by themselves, would support a recreational tourism destination well

D. Town is quaint, can walk downtown, small businesses, farmers market, lake access not that far

F. Friendly, Mayberry type place away from the rat race.

E. Beautiful rural setting with so much potential with outdoor recreation

20. What type of improvements could help increase tourism within your community? (select all that apply):

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. More local attractions | 100% |
| 2. Improvements to existing attractions | 83% |
| 3. Increased promotion & marketing of existing attractions | 83% |
| 4. Dedicated staff/personnel to advocate for tourism-based opportunities | 83% |
| 5. More traditional hotels or lodging | 67% |
| 6. Downtown Revitalization/Improvements | 67% |
| 7. More AirBnb/Short term rental options | 33% |
| 8. Other (please specify) | 17% |
| a. Multi modal path connecting the towns, S line connection in Norlina | |

21. Are there any existing outdoor recreation related businesses in or near your community (retail shops, guides, bike shops, manufacturing companies, etc.)? List all that apply:

A. Lake Gaston Outfitters, Bill's Marine, Overby Marine, Lake Life Clothing, AF Wake

B. Lake Gaston Outfitters, Adam Fields, Wake Surf NC, Doozie Boat Lifts, Lake Gaston Jet Ski, Lake Country Marine, Poplar Pointe Marine, South Pointe Marina, Eaton Ferry Marina, Stonehouse Timber Lodge, Lake Gaston Summer Rentals, Blues Brothers Guide Service, Sand Dollar Seaplanes, Chockoyotte Country Club, Tanglewood Shores Association

C. Lake Gaston Outfitters (retail & rental) kayaks, paddleboards, bikes, gear, meetup events

D. Lake Gaston outfitters, Buchanan's store, Marina's

E. Lake Gaston Outfitters. Adam Fields' business.

F. Lake Gaston Outfitters

22. Are there any other existing businesses in or near your community that depend on, or benefit from, people engaging in outdoor recreation activities (hospitality businesses that cater to outdoor recreation participants, restaurants, breweries, lodging, etc.)? List all that apply:

A. WatersView Restaurant, The Pointe Restaurant, Jenny Cakes @ the Lake, Stone House Timber Lodge, Lake Gaston Pizza, Lake Gaston Pizza, etc.

B. property management companies, Air B & B hosts, WatersView Restaurant, Shady Shack, Bragging Rooster, Lake Gaston Coffee, Lake Gaston Outfitters, The Pointe at Lake Gaston, Lake Gaston Jet Ski, Lake Country Marine, Adam Fields Wakeboarding School

C. Jenny cakes at the lake, Lake Gaston coffee, WatersView, the pointe, blue jay bistro, Daphnes, Drip, Locorum, bragging rooster, mill hill

D. Breweries, Distilleries, Ivy, Dollar General's, Food Lion

E. All of that is in place to some extent.

23. Are there any additional business types or needed services (such as a bike shop, tackle shop, guide service, equipment rental, etc.) to support outdoor recreation in the community? If so, please describe.

A. Bike shop, tackle and outdoor supply shop, guide service, equipment rental; all the above.

B. Tackle shops/outdoorsmen (hunting and fishing related)

C. The businesses are here. The tourists are only here 12 weeks/year.

D. Lake Gaston Outfitters, Buchanan's store,

E. For something to be successful here, it would need to not be too specific. A combined business offering all the examples you provide could work.

F. Recreation Department and local businesses to offer guided services/events as well as equipment rentals as local businesses to sale equipment

24. Are the business assistance resources available in your community adequate to support the needs of existing businesses and prospective entrepreneurs?

YES – 33%

NO – 50%

Not Sure – 17%

25. If yes, what business assistance resources are available?

A. Kerr-Tar Regional, Small Business Centers and Associations through local community colleges, Lake Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce.

B. VGCC Small Business Center

26. If not, what could be done to improve the resources and support available for existing businesses and prospective entrepreneurs?

A. Access to capital, staff capacity to assist current and potential entrepreneurs in accessing existing small business support (from local community colleges, etc.), workforce development.

B. Due to the imbalance of in-season vs off-season, viable business models are challenging. Brokering LOC's to get businesses through the winter, or developing recreation tourism to draw people here in the off-season would be beneficial

C. Robust Chamber of Commerce or business association.

27. Is improving quality of life for residents an economic development strategy within your community?

YES – 83%

NO – 17%

Not Sure – 0%

28. Is it common for individuals in your community to participate in outdoor recreation activities to improve their health?

YES – 83%

NO – 0%

Not Sure – 17%

29. If you answered no, please explain why, in your opinion, individuals do not participate in outdoor recreation to benefit their health?

No response

30. Do you feel that all members of your community have easy access to places where they can participate in outdoor recreation?

YES – 0%

NO – 100%

Not Sure – 0%

31. If no, what could be done to increase access and accessibility to outdoor recreation for more members of the community? Are there specific populations that do not have easy access to outdoor recreation assets?

A. Improving the existing park and common spaces, creating more public access points on Lake Gaston. Integrate outdoor recreation opportunities and training in public ed, and elder housing facilities when possible

B. working with leaders within Dominion Energy to ensure accessibility to Lake Gaston for the public in all five counties Lake Gaston touches.

C. There are no local assets with critical mass. Out-of-town tourists don't come here (except lake Gaston 12 weeks/yr.), and residents travel to other counties and states for outdoor recreation due to the lack of assets here. This region needs a park/forest with 25+mi of mountain bike trail, 20+mi of hiking trail to become a destination. The closer it is located to a town and an interstate, the more successful it will be.

D. Public transportation- those in rural pockets of the community who don't have transportation

E. Poverty

F. Indicated previously items that could be done to improve access. In addition, transportation, or pathway development to increase access. Yes-need ADA access as well as more access points throughout the County as well as rental or free loaner equipment to ensure equity

32. Are there sufficient opportunities for youth to participate in outdoor recreation activities?

YES – 17%

NO – 50%

Not Sure – 33%

33. If no, what could be done to encourage more youth participation in outdoor recreation activities?

A. relationship building between business owners and schools/youth programs, accessibility

B. Ex: NICA has openly stated the MTB trails at Medoc Mtn are not conducive to a league event. We would love to develop NICA in Warren County, but there are no assets to support it. This is an amazing program for middle & high school students - more: <https://www.northcarolinamtb.org/>

C. Development of organized youth programs by qualified staff (need workforce development)

34. What organization or business do you represent?

A. Warren County Community and Economic Development

B. Lake Gaston Regional Chamber of Commerce

C. Lake Gaston Outfitters

D. Vance-Granville Community College

E. Town of Warrenton

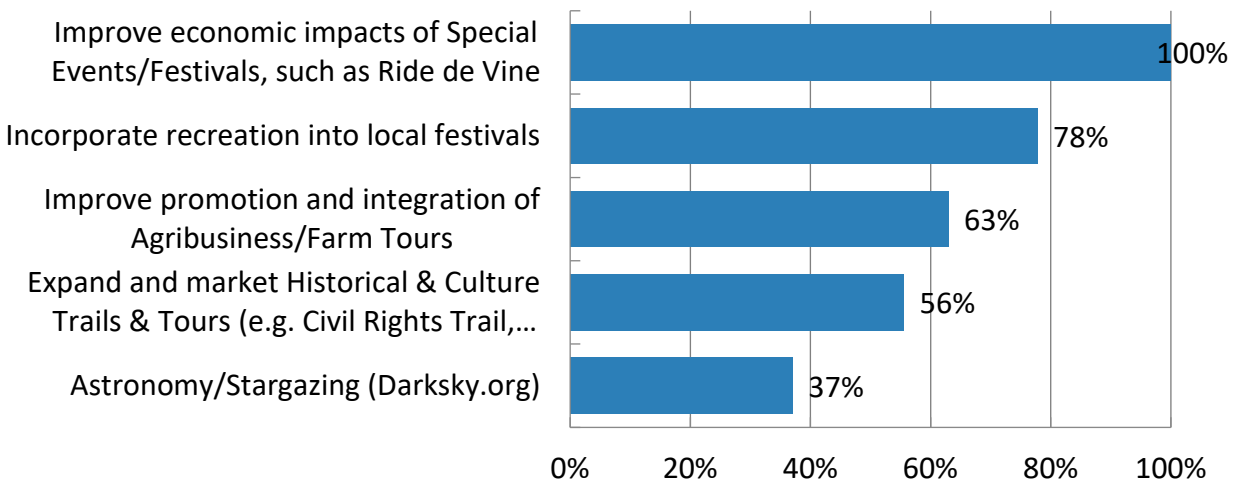
F. Warren County Parks and Recreation



CORE Workgroup Priorities Survey
July 7, 2023

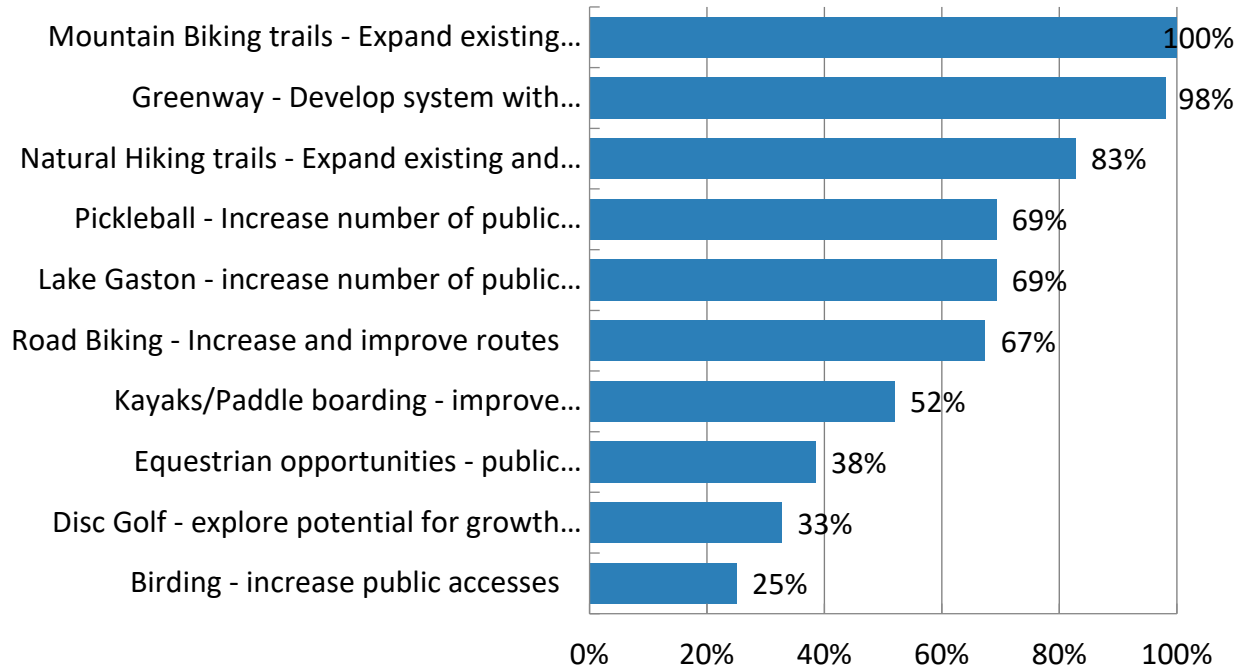
Number of respondents: 6

1) Please rank the following within the TOURISM & HOSPITALITY areas of growth with 1 being the highest priority and 6 being the lowest priority.



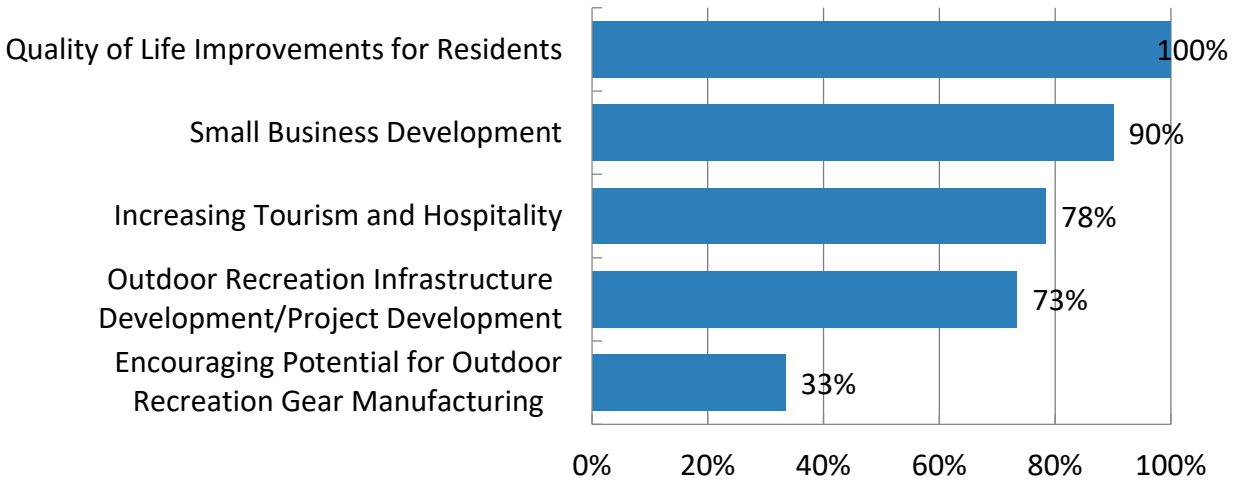
- Need to look at how to better track metrics around impact of tourism
- Quantify current tourism impact (\$\$) and visitor origin to be able to attract hotel(s) on I-85 exit
- Infrastructure challenges for long term stays. great for day trips
- Warren is still rich in Agriculture. People will come to visit farms & stay on the farms if option

Please rank the following the **OUTDOOR RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE** areas of growth with 1 being the highest priority and 10 being the lowest priority.

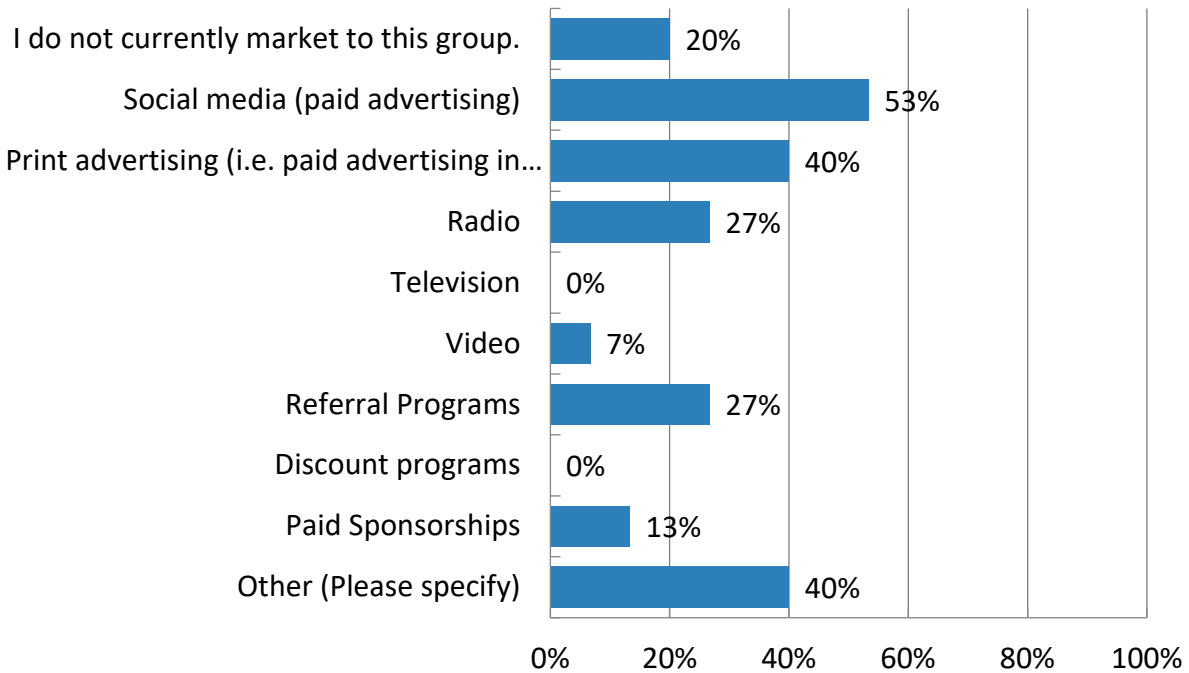


**Warren County/Warrenton
CORE Outdoor Recreation Business/Stakeholder Questionnaire Results
09/29/23**

1) How would you rank the following focus areas in order of importance to Warren County’s community and economic developing strategy regarding outdoor recreation? (1 is most important, and 5 is least important)

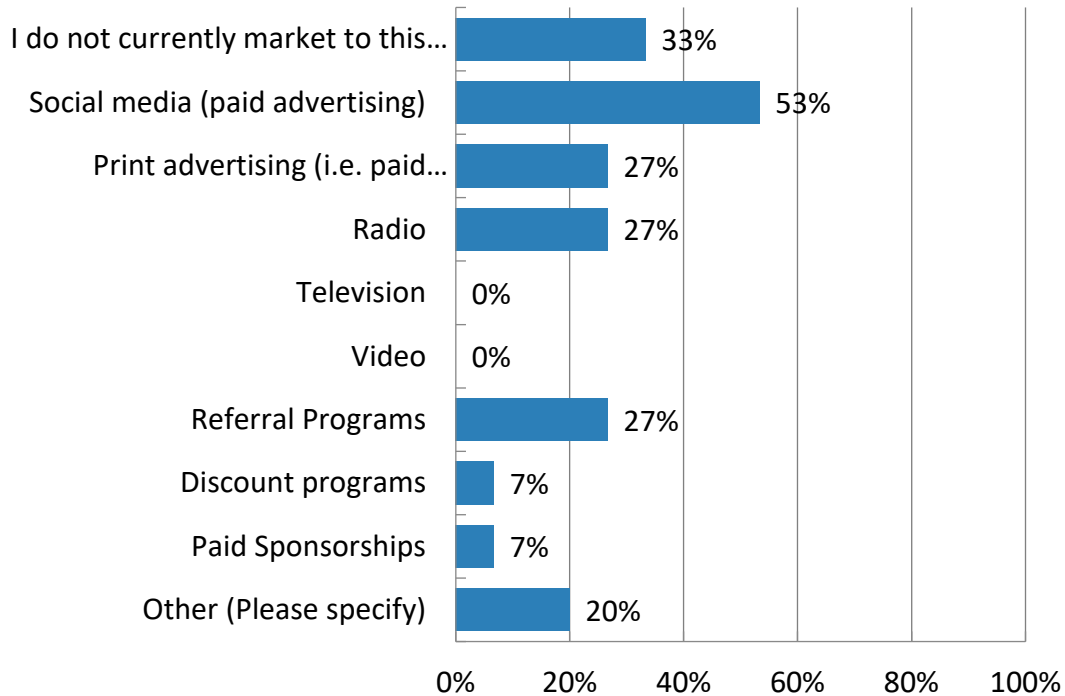


2) How do you currently market your business/organization to people that live in Warren County that participate in outdoor recreation activities? Mark all that apply:



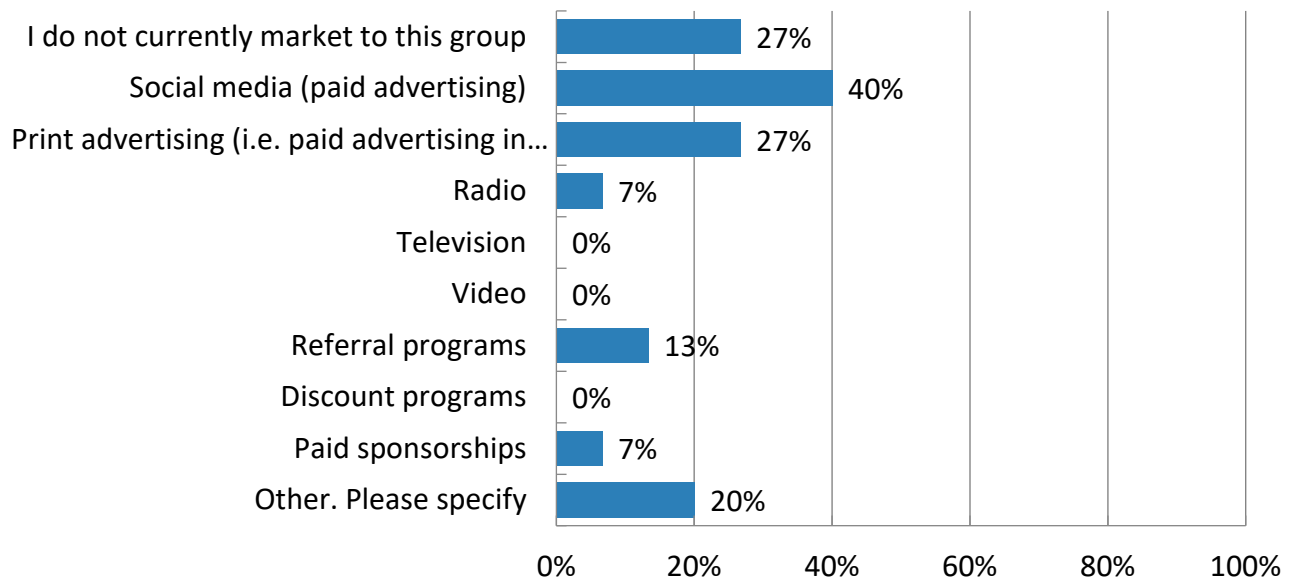
Other: Word of mouth (2); Website (2); Quarterly bulletin; Social media – non-paid (3)

3) How do you currently market your business/organization to people that visit Warren County who participate in outdoor recreation activities? Mark all that apply:



Other: Word of mouth; Website; Social media – no advertising

4) How do you currently market your business/organization to potential future visitors of Warren County that participate in outdoor recreation activities? Mark all that apply.

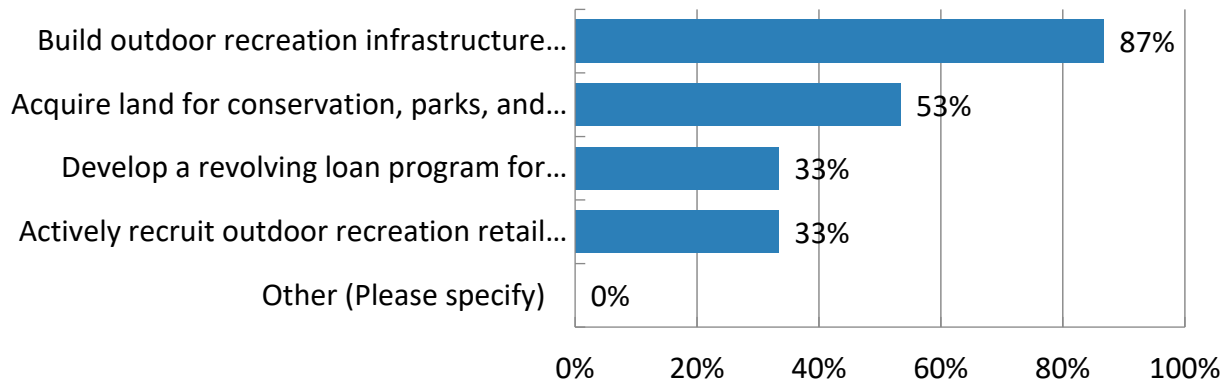


Other: Word of mouth; Website (2)

5. Do you believe that local government should invest more local funding into building and supporting the outdoor recreation industry?

YES – 73%
 IT DEPENDS – 27%
 NO – 0%
 NOT SURE – 0%

6. If yes, what do you believe local government should invest in?



7. What are challenges to Warren County being an overnight destination for visitors?

Lodging – 10
 Event Information (ease and accuracy) – 4
 Restaurants – 3
 Advertising (Events/activities) – 2
Appearance – 1
Broadband – 1
Gathering places – 1
Grocery – 1
Hospitality – 1
Housing – 1
Project funding - 1

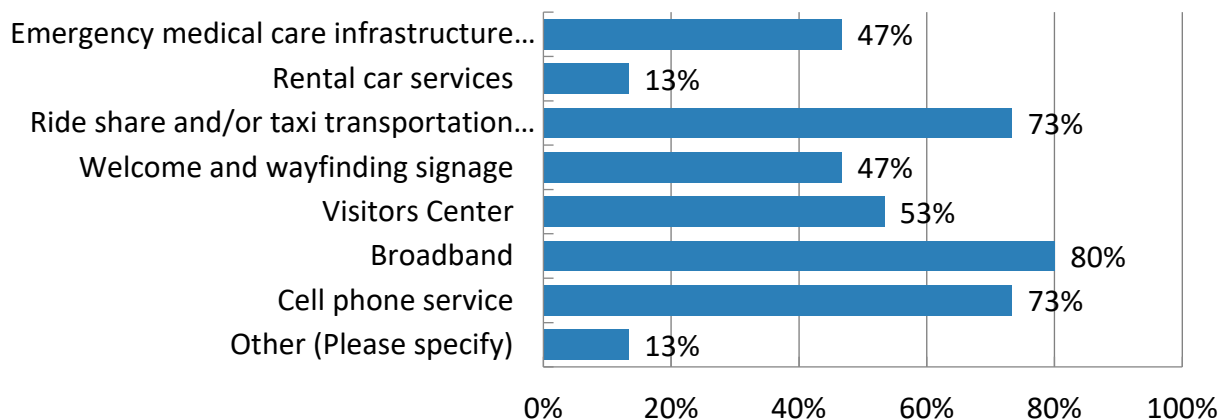
- Lack of grocery vendor
- Complications for booking for short stays
- Complications in finding information (online only)
- Internet and phone services need help
- Availability of short-term rentals waterfront
- Access to event information: after viewing events on website, which I could only access via a google search, I could not view them via the navigation menu that I am aware of, I noticed Visit Warren County uses Everwondr's event plugin. This plugin pulls events from

many zip codes or a mileage proximity. On your first page of events, I saw a listing for everywhere but Warren County. The Nashville NC listing sticks out, sends folks ...*out of characters*

- Lodging
- Housing
- Hospitality
- Accommodations other than short term rentals
- Lack of hotel/motel rooms with business/conference facilities
- Advertising of local stay options and local maps with points of interest.
- Inadequate lodging
- Restaurants
- Advertisements for local events would help
- Hotel/ motel
- Lack of adequate outdoor communal areas
- Availability of lodging, also lack of restaurants, tourist attractions, etc.
- Funding and commitment to a dedicated project
- The feedback I receive is that although the town of Warrenton is "nice", "cute" "beautiful" on first sight, it loses its appeal due to empty and dirty buildings that are not maintained. Regarding the rest of Warren County, it needs all the outdoor pursuits mentioned and some indoor ones that are not alcohol or food related.
- Limited number of hotels and Bed and Breakfast for lodging.
- Limited number of restaurants.
- Not many overnight rental or motel options

8. What services are needed to improve the visitor experience and improve the economic impact of tourism and outdoor recreation? Select your top 4 choices.

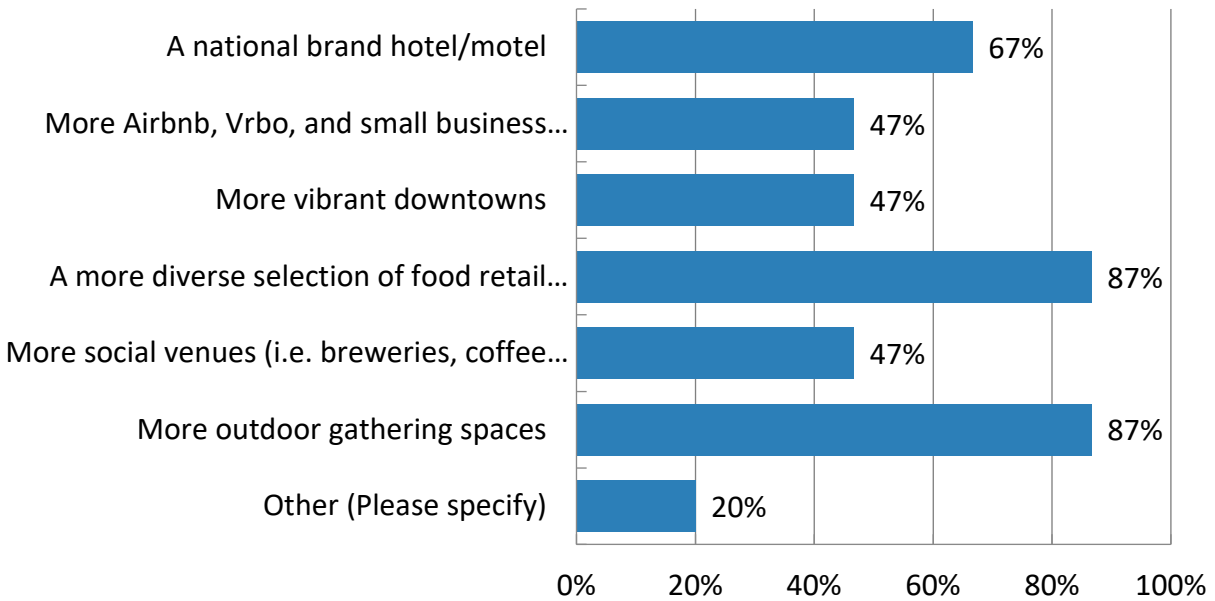
- 1) Broadband – 80%
- 2) Cell phone service – 73%
- 3) Ride share/Taxi – 73%
- 4) Visitor Center – 53%



Other: "Many of our visitors are not in activities that require ride-share/transportation and majority are driving, not flying in to visit"; Hotels & 24-hour medical care

9. What amenities and accommodations are needed to improve visitor experience and improve the economic impact of tourism and outdoor recreation? Select your top 4 choices.

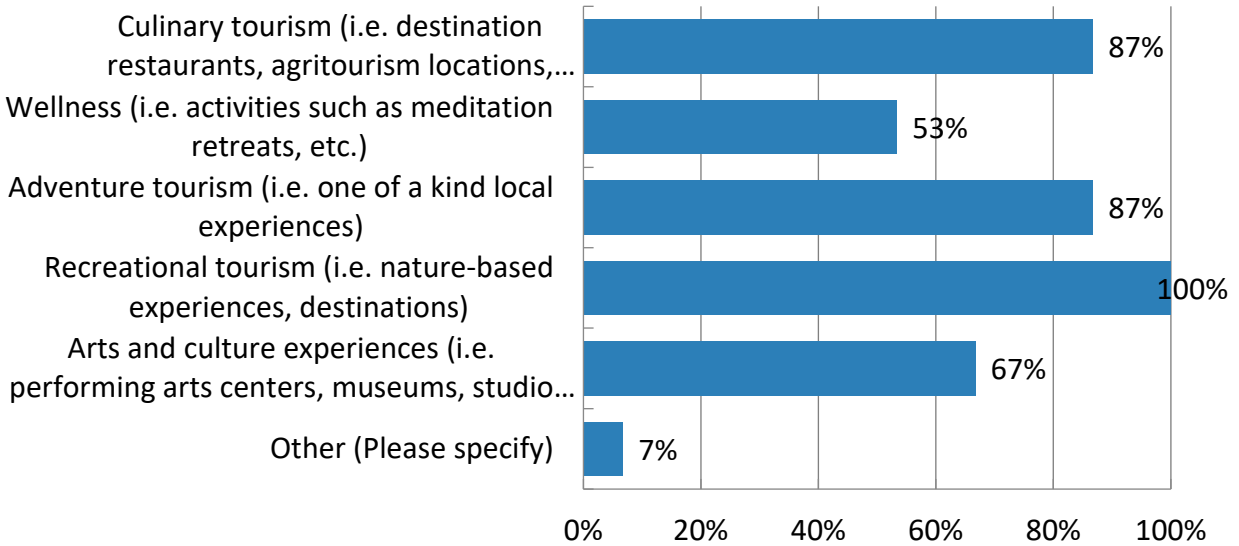
- 1) A more diverse selection of food, retail, and restaurant opportunities – 87%
- 2) More outdoor gathering spaces – 87%
- 3) A national brand hotel/motel – 67%
- 4) Tied
 - a. More Airbnb, VRBO, and small business lodging options – 47%
 - b. More vibrant downtowns – 47%
 - c. More social venues (breweries, coffee shops, etc.) 47%



Other: event/concert or gathering venues, will improve quality of life and draw seasonal visitors; Transportation options (Uber, Lift, taxi, etc.); More unique retail stores and coffee meeting places that are open into the evening.

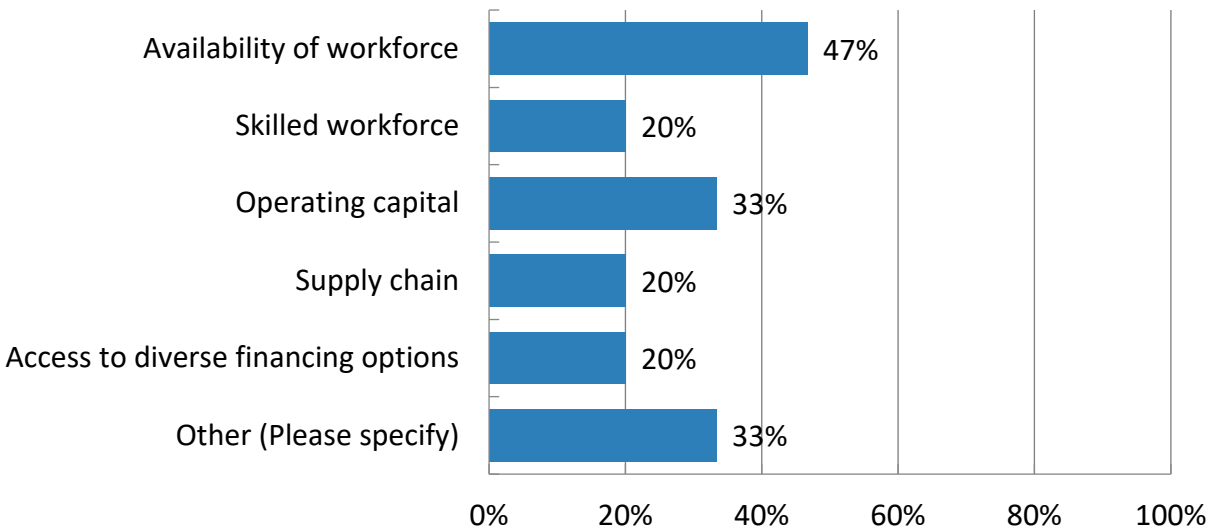
10. What types of attractions are needed to improve visitor experience and improve the economic impact of tourism and outdoor recreation? Select your top 4 choices.

1. Recreational Tourism – 100%
2. Culinary Tourism – 87%
3. Adventure Tourism – 87%
4. Arts & Culture Experiences – 67%



Other: Recreation for kids of all ages indoor and outdoor

11. Currently, what are your biggest challenges to successfully and sustainably manage your business or organization in Warren County? Mark all that apply.

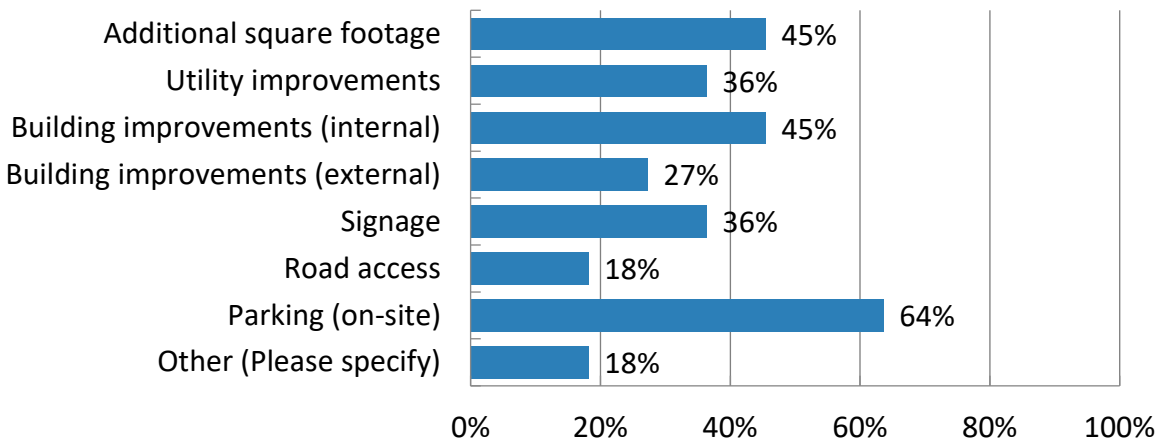


Other: Advertising; Availability of volunteers; Inventory of affordable homes; County demographics; Attracting a workforce of diverse skills

12. Is the current physical space where you operate your business adequate to meet your current and future needs?

YES – 60%
NO – 27%
Not Sure – 13%

13. If not, what improvements are needed regarding the space where you operate your business? Check all that apply.



Other: Not a business owner

14. Do you have plans, or would you like to, expand your business?

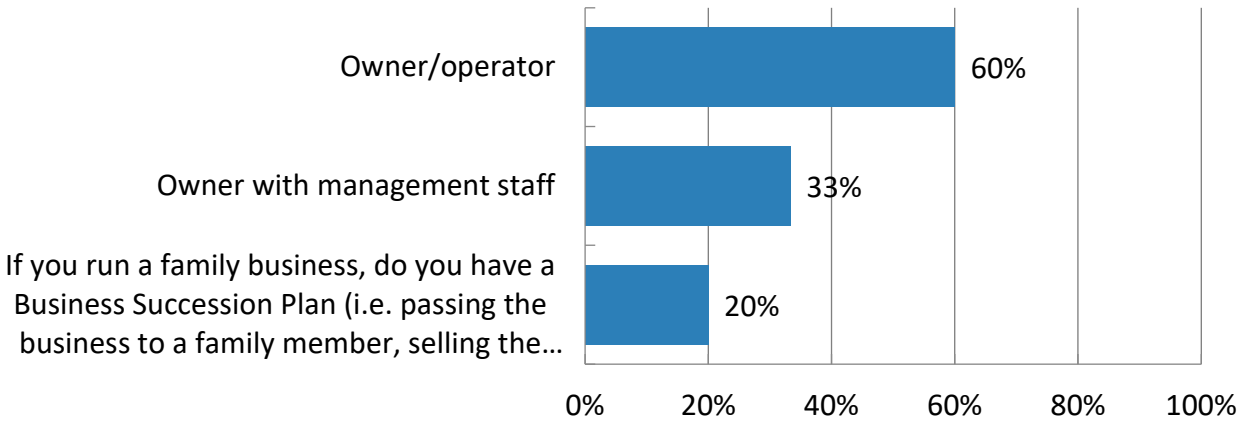
YES – 50%
NO – 21%
MAYBE – 14%
I DON'T KNOW – 14%

15. If so, what would help you, or what do you need, to be able to achieve these goals?

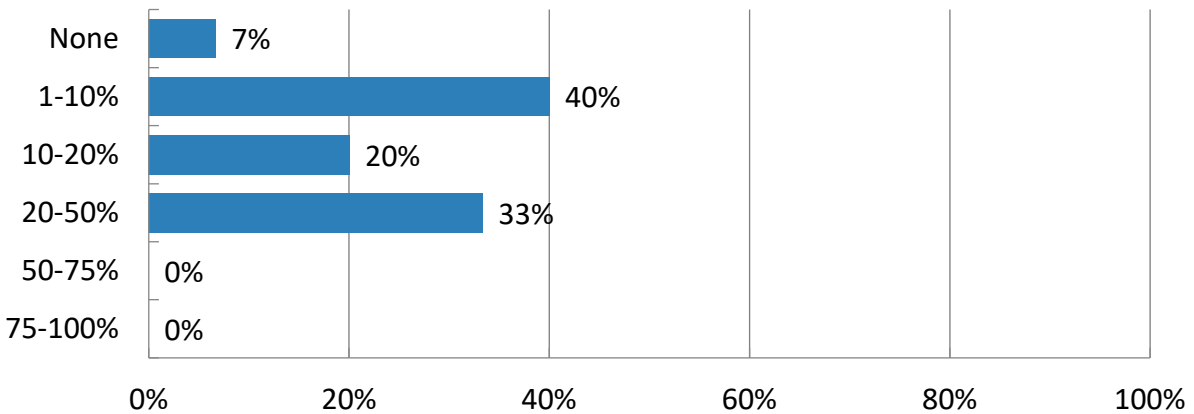
- Financing, would like some on site housing/bath house options for overnight stays
- Not a business owner
- Networking, collaboration, advertising
- Volunteers
- Pave Peete Farm Road and provide internet service
- Access to larger space
- Funding for square footage and building improvements
- I'd like to have a public location one day and expand into retail sales of local reclaimed materials

- More time
- Grant funds
- Revolving small business loan

16. What are your long-term goals for the ownership structure of the company?



17. Approximately what percentage of goods, services, or other materials do you purchase from Warren County-based companies?

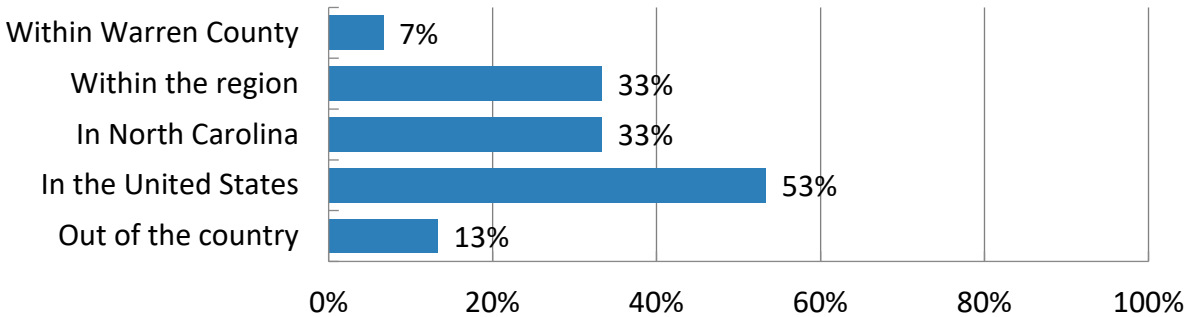


18. What goods, services, or materials are difficult to obtain that would be helpful if you could purchase from a locally based company?

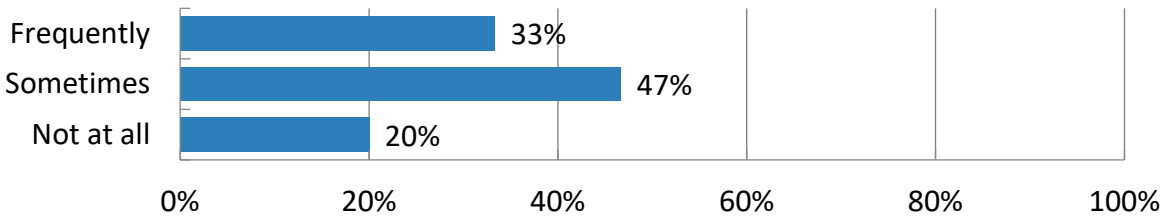
- Hay, groceries, flyers, or printed media
- Building materials
- Website management
- Internet service
- Office supplies
- Most of our raw materials

- Produce, meats, garments, crafts, healthcare products
- Raw Steel and Galvanizer plant
- Seeds
- Good quality fruit and veg that doesn't cost an arm and a leg
- office supplies
- Paper products

19. Are your primary/major suppliers located:



20. Do you partner with local businesses within Warren County? (For example, co-hosting events, referral programs, shared advertising costs)



21. What other types of businesses are needed to help support your business/organization?

- Food services, overnight facilities
- Catering, event supply rentals
- Chamber of Commerce
- Restaurants, grocery stores, hotels
- All types of small businesses
- We mostly focus on online sales, but the more business and tourism grows, the more feasible it would be to offer services to our local community as well.
- Farmers, agricultural departments
- Water Sports and dock builders
- Tool repair, plumbing, electrical

- More restaurants, more lodging options
- More farmers
- An open tourist information center with knowledgeable staff, open stores
- Restaurant groups

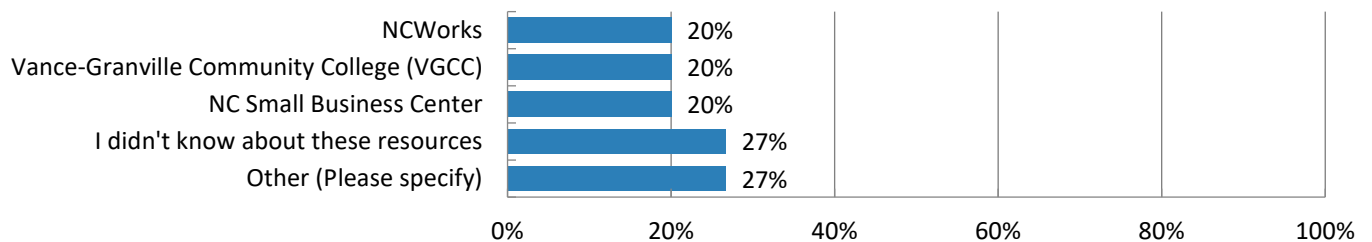
22. What is your biggest workforce/employee training need?

- Lawn and general farm maintenance
- Affordable manual labor
- Effective Social Media & Website usage
- Office management skills
- Management
- Sales and marketing
- We need employees that come to work every day and on time
- Carpentry
- More local volunteers
- Community College - qualified instructors to teach specific workforce programs
- Extra summer staff

23. Is there a particular skill or training that would benefit current or prospective employees to qualify them to successfully gain employment at your business?

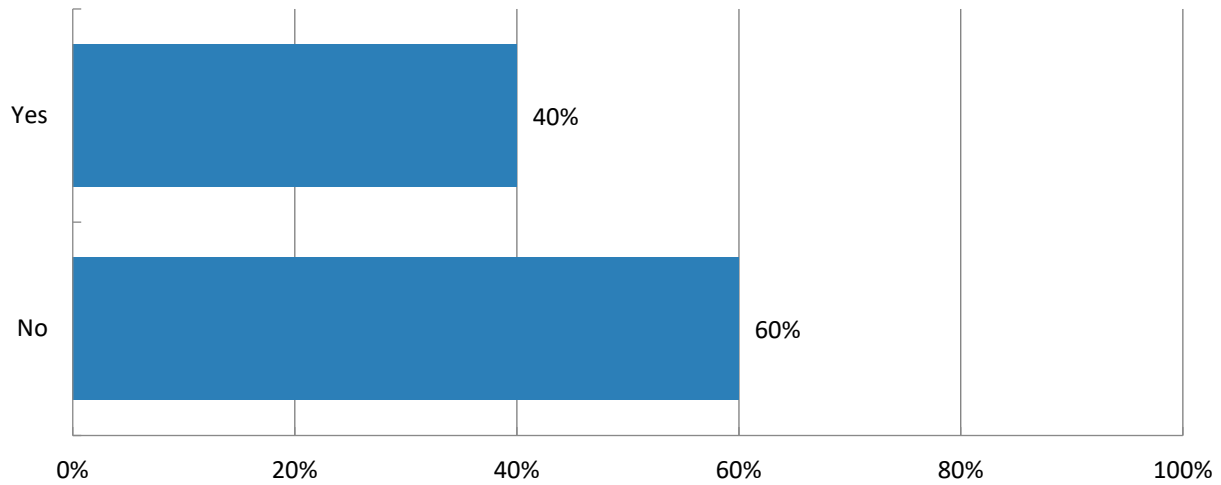
- Dedication
- Strong work ethic
- Insurance knowledge with computer skills
- Logistics
- Small business training, farming
- Responsibilities, time management, drivers' license
- Carpentry
- Future Farmer of America Program
- Variety of skills for teaching trade type classes
- Servsafe food training

24. Have you ever utilized workforce development resources, such as NCWorks, Vance-Granville Community College or the NC Small Business Center, to help fill roles or provide employee training that would benefit your business? Mark all that apply.



Other: Not needed at this time; N/A; I work for VGCC; Haven't used

25. Have you ever had contact with Warren County Community and Economic Development staff regarding business expansion or retention services?



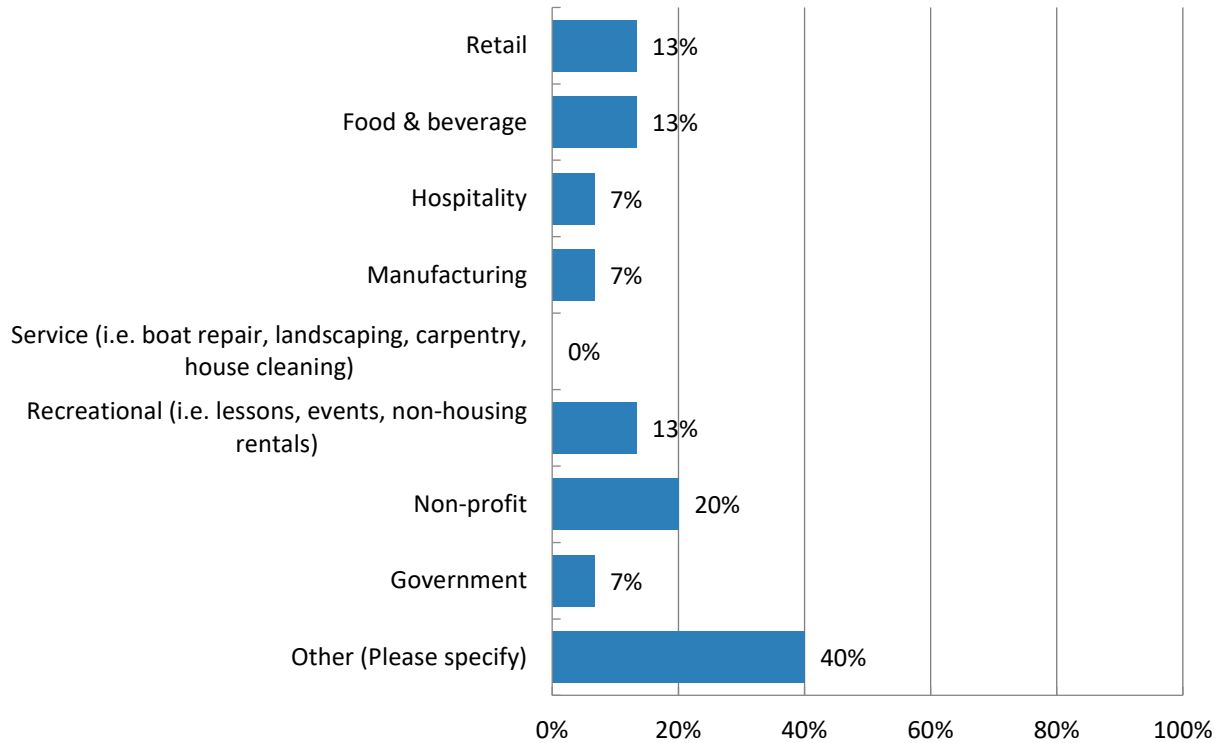
26. If yes, what was it for?

- Building a better platform for tourism and marketing
- Initial consultation
- Marketing
- Grants
- EDC as partner with the college workforce development and business and industry
- Catering to local businesses

27. If no, are you familiar with this organization

- Yes (4)
- Somewhat
- No but possibly some others in our organization are
- I believe they have been to conferences, but I can't think of feedback that would help
- No
- Vaguely

28. What is your industry/business/organization type? Choose one to fit your primary function:



Other: Christian ministry; Real estate; Retail insurance; General contracting; agriculture; Community college

30. What is your business or organization name?

1. Rockin' E Ranch
2. Kerr-Tar Regional COG
3. Homestead Farm
4. Lake Gaston Association
5. Terry Keene, eXp Realty, LLC
6. Warren County Farmers Market
7. George Humphries Contracting
8. Ride de Vine
9. Brown Family Farms DBA The Connect Group NC LLC.
10. Vance-Granville Community College
11. Lake Gaston Coffee Company

Would you like to continue partnering with County staff to build out a strategy supporting the Outdoor Recreation industry in Warren County? This may include future discussions, being part of an ongoing team to help implement goals and objectives and being informed and kept up to date. If so, please share your name and contact information:

Full Name	Erin Erickson
Email Address	rockineranch2193@gmail.com
Telephone	(252) 287-6594

Full Name	Marley Spencer
Email Address	m Spencer@kerrtarcog.org

Full Name	Steve and Susan Bender
Email Address	Homesteadflowerfarm@yahoo.com
Telephone	(252) 213-0133

Full Name	Jeff Zimmer
Email Address	Jzimmer2216@gmail.com
Telephone	(409) 617-2216

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Email Address	Tkeene630@gmail.com
Telephone	(919) 796-2647

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Email Address	tamarasmall@warrencountync.gov
Telephone	(252) 213-7246

Full Name	George Humphries
Email Address	trimboss1972@gmail.com
Telephone	(252) 820-3404

Full Name	Joshua Hughey
Email Address	joshua.hughey@gmail.com

Full Name	Patrick Brown
Email Address	info@connectgroupllc.com
Telephone	(252) 820-0449

Full Name	Kyle Burwell
Email Address	burwellk@vgcc.edu
Telephone	(252) 738-3521

Full Name	Jason Shearin
Email Address	Jason@lakegastoncoffee.com
Telephone	(252) 532-5464

Warren County/Warrenton

Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)

Notes as of 3/27/2023

9:30 am – 11:30 am (extended w/group consent)

Attendance: Leanne Patrick, Bonnie Fitz, Dave Blodgett, Mike Coffman, Kyle Burwell, Rose Ponton, Robert Davie; Staff: Bruce Naegelen, David McRae (9)

GENERAL THOUGHTS/COMMENTS

- How to bookend shoulder seasons (countywide)
- Year-round destination to bolster “off-season”
- Public support + Buy-in = enthusiasm
- How to help build a destination?
 - Placemaking

ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Lake Gaston

Kerr Lake

- Lakes will “take care of themselves”
- Obvious and fixed – Only 12-week season
- Local meetups for activities, but occurs outside Warren County (i.e. Halifax...)

Hunting

Fishing

Ride de Vine – bicycling event

- 675 participants in 2022
- 425 (approx.) participants in 2023 due to weather (rain)

ASSETS

Community

Haley Haywood Park

- Disc Golf throughout – *not great*
- Other opportunities?

Kerr Lake -Kimball Point

- Better opportunity (than Lake G) for non-motorized activity

Lake Gaston

- Day use potential site
- Lake Gaston 5 Year Shoreline Management Plan (Dominion Energy -Will Miller)
 - Public Water Access limited (*Unsafe for paddlers*)
 - Kayak rental available, but not great public access areas

Buck Springs Park

- Public Kayak launch

- Bike trails – may be NICA compliant
- Access

Pickleball

- Courts available and under construction

Human Resource

Eastern Bluebird Fest (official name developing)

- Warrenton most bluebirds in NC
- Late Frank Newell advocate to rejuvenate bluebird population
- Rebranding festival
- Could be catalyst for birding/birdwatching

Institutional

Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce

- serves entire county

Town of Norlina

No Tourism Authority – Occupancy Tax?

Natural

Game lands – opportunity?

https://www.ncleg.gov/enactedlegislation/statutes/pdf/bysection/chapter_143b/gs_143b-135.100.pdf

- 16,000 acres in Warren County

S.W.O.T. Analysis

STRENGTHS

Agri-business/Tourism

- Farm Tours

Calm community

- Small Town Feel
- Retreat from rat race

Disc Golf & Birding

Warrenton Downtown Revitalization Association

Festivals

- Spring Fest
- Harvest Market

Ragged Rooster – walk/run club

Wineries

- Seven Springs

WEAKNESS

Buck Springs lacks critical mass of trail Funding

Funding

Marketing –

- Partnership; collaboration; communication
- Who is the initiator?

No bike lanes (on roads)

OPPORTUNITY

Apprenticeship Program?

Astronomy

- Dark Sky www.darksky.org Professor Daniel B Caton catond.b@appstate.edu
- Star gazing

Buy-in needed from the public

- Engagement – help communication to be involved in the process
- Not change--Improve!
- “Progressively Preserve”

Engage with Community College

- How best to leverage this asset?
- Entrepreneur Camp

Climbing Wall/Bouldering?

- Feasible, but not likely

Cooperative Extension Cultural/Historical Resources Map

- Partner

County land area --- how much owned by state?

Don't spread too thin

- Prioritize strategies

Farmers Market Expansion – Lion's Den

- Walking trails

Guide Service

- Fish, hunt, other?

Historic Walking Tours/Trails

- Civil Rights Trail
- African American History Trail
- Lafayette Tour route
- App? Map?

Light manufacturing

- Land available at I-85 interchanges
- Need buildings
- Site ID Program Report (Golden Leaf)
 - Available soon

Multimodal Path Feasibility Study

- National Park Service (NPS) grant – what’s included?

Middle/High School property

- Trail potential?
- Pump track?

Mounted Archery Group

Potential Rail Trail?

- CSX multiple routes
- May have reverted to adjacent property owners SA Line
- Much is dependent on “S Line” project
- Should encourage rail trails, but will be a longer-term process
- What is legal status of Rail r/w

Office space in Downtown Warrenton in high demand

- Need for more?

Retail

Restaurants needed

- Diversity of food options desired

Triangle Off-Road Cyclists (TORC)

- 11 miles of trail @ Medoc Mtn – improvements underway

Youth Participation/Engagement – how to improve?

- National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) league would be great

###

Warren County/Warrenton

Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)

Notes as of 4/24/2023

9:30 am – 11:30 am

Attendance: Dave Blodgett, Heidi Blodgett, Mike Coffman, Bonnie Fitz, Leanne Patrick, Rose Ponton, Robert Davie; Staff: Bruce Naegelen, David McRae

REVIEW:

ECONOMIC DRIVERS

- Ride de Vine – bicycling event
 - 3rd year of event – started 2021
 - 675 participants in 2022
 - 425 (approx.) participants in 2023 due to weather (rain)
 - Discussion: How to improve the economic impact of this event? Small business participation?
- Pickleball
 - Is this a priority for the plan? Yes
 - If existing courts are adequate, what improvements can be made?
 - Have had tournaments
 - Indoor courts
 - Hosts Senior Games
 - There is some economic impact
 - Keep track of what is needed regarding existing facilities
 - [Magnolia Ernest Recreation Park](#) (Soul City) – some Pickleball courts

ASSETS

Community

Corrected spelling: **Hayley** Haywood Park

Added: Outdoor Volleyball Court (could be considered?) – Demand?

Added: Haliwa Saponi Tribe – Assets and engagement? How could this tie-in?

Contacts:

- Chief Dr. Brucie Ogletree Green Richardson borichardson@haliwa-saponi.org
- Tribal administrator – Jamie Oxendine 252-586-4017 x222
joxendine@haliwa-saponi.com

Human Resource

Clarification: Current Springfest is rebranding as Eastern Bluebird Fest (official name developing)

Add:

- Warren County Parks & Recreation as Human Asset
- NC State Cooperative Extension

Institutional

Added: Previous Outdoor Recreation Planning Process?

- Part of Warren County Comprehensive Plan
Downloaded plan and will add to Sharepoint

Natural

Game lands – discussion and review of map generated by David McCrae

S.W.O.T. Analysis

STRENGTHS

Correction: ~~Ragged~~ **Bragging** Rooster – hosts a weekly run/walk club

WEAKNESS

No changes

OPPORTUNITY

No changes

THREATS

Added:

- Funding
- Limitations set on Lake Gaston by Dominion Energy & US Army Corps of Engineers
 - Usage
 - Shoreline
- Competing interest between motorized & non-motorized activity on Lake Gaston

GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS – REVIEW & DISCUSSION

- Potential Regional Partnerships?
 - Who can help us get things done?
- Leverage Warren County as “base camp”
 - Increased availability for activities within county
 - Increased opportunities for retail/restaurant “after the ride”
- Current “window of opportunity” to develop outdoor recreation activities
 - Don’t want to fall behind neighboring/regional jurisdictions
 - Warren County may have fewer financial resources to build/expand facilities

GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS – REVIEW & DISCUSSION *(continued)*

- 3.3 miles of bike trail at Buck Spring
 - What improvements? Marketing
 - Create multiple “reasons” for someone to visit
- Closest Game Land tract to Warrenton is most strategic location – **Prioritize**
 - How to engage with Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC)
 - How to present what uses Warren County/Warrenton would like to see
 - What user groups could be engaged to assist with “advocacy” process?
 - Triangle Off-Road Cyclists (TORC) – potential partner.
 - Could they help advocate?
- How to incorporate recreation into local festivals?
 - There is a need to provide more “draw” **of what/whom?**
- How to address two most important benefits from survey:
 - Workforce
 - Increasing business
- Kayak kiosk
 - there are companies that do this
- Need for kiosk rentals
 - Government or private business
 - Public/private partnership?
- Discussed Bicycle Kiosks
 - Bikes more fragile
 - More direct/constant oversight needed
- Bike Share opportunities
 - More suited to hard surfaces (road, greenways)
 - Still a big question of maintenance
 - Some (unvetted) vendors have reached out to Warren County regarding opportunities
 - County Parks & Recreation will provide information to Economic Development Office
- Trail Construction & Maintenance
 - Opportunity
 - Specification for construction is technical (not just chainsaws and bulldozers)
- Multi-modal Pathway Study – underway
- TORC (Triangle Off-Road Cyclists) **(see flip chart #5)**
 - Potential to better engage
 - Gauge interest in expanding their involvement in future trails
 - Demonstrating ability to maintain trails
 - Partner on trail maintenance

GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS – REVIEW & DISCUSSION *(continued)*

- Businesses
 - For something to be successful, don't be too specific (about type)
- Warren County Parks & Recreation
 - Broadening services beyond traditional team sports
- Gap in service available in kayak rental space at point of water access
 - Potential for partnership between local government and private business?
 - Existing models?

Q-31

- Dominion Shoreline Plan
 - Has specific plan/relationship with each county
 - What they want to see
 - Who in Warren County is engaged in these talks?
- Need 250 acres to develop 25+ miles of mountain bike trail and 20+ miles of hiking trail to become a destination
 - 1 mile of trail per 10 acres
 - “The land is there. Question of funding” – **Consider prioritizing where to make these investments**
 - Land acquisition – then trail building and maintenance
 - Should be located close to town/commercial centers
- “Get your outdoor bucket list checked off in Warren County!”
- “Find balance between preservation and growth”
- “Plan so you define growth“
- Warren County:
 - Home of Environmental Justice movement
 - Agrarian past
 - Racial reckoning
- Existing Warren County Comprehensive Plan (August 2022) focuses on:
 - Sustainability
 - Agriculture
 - Outdoor recreation

GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS – REVIEW & DISCUSSION *(continued)*

- Generating interest within this outdoor space
 - Cultivate buy-in
 - Town and county get behind it **together**
 - Collaboration between municipalities and county
 - “We are all in the same boat”
 - Historically this has happened some
 - Needs to continue
- “Progressively Preserve”
- Follow Main Street principles

- What makes Warren County “Warren County”?
 - Values
 - Warren EDC has vision/mission-type verbiage
- Quality of life is important
 - Only want to change is for the better

- Kerr-Tar R.C. – place for engagement?

- Brief overview of Outdoor Recreation Economic Positioning/Vision Statement
 - Will devote most of next meeting to developing statement

- *Discussion about expanding meeting time by 30 minutes – all agreed

Next meeting: Wednesday, May 24, 2023 9:30 am – 11:30 am*
Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce
2357 Eaton Ferry Road
Littleton, NC 27850

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Warren County/Warrenton Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)

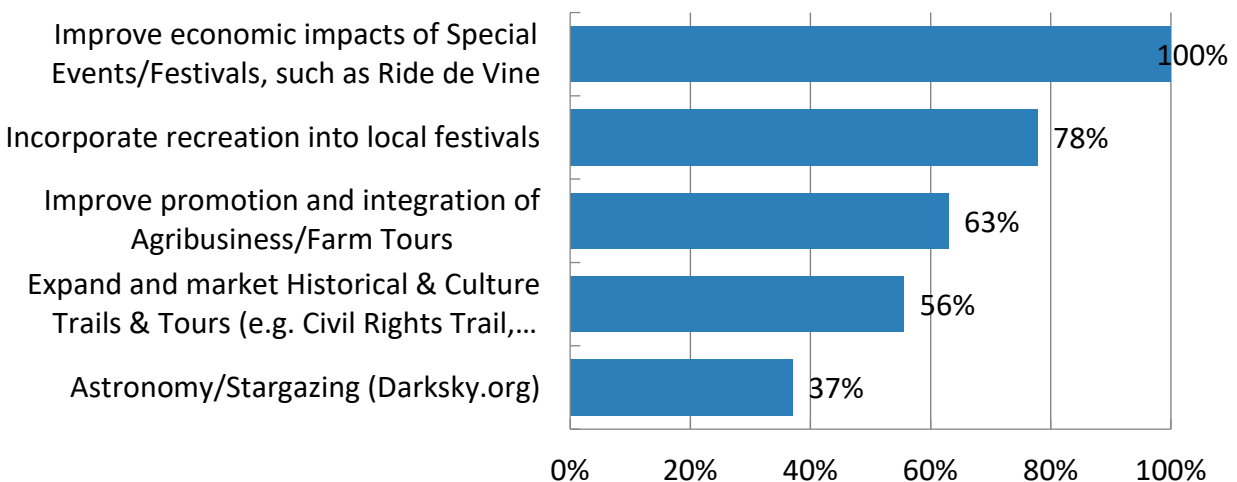
7/11/23

9:30 am – 11:30 am

Attendance: Dave Blodgett, Mike Coffman, Leanne Patrick, Rose Ponton, Robert Davie;
Jereann King Blue Staff: Bruce Naegelen, David McRae

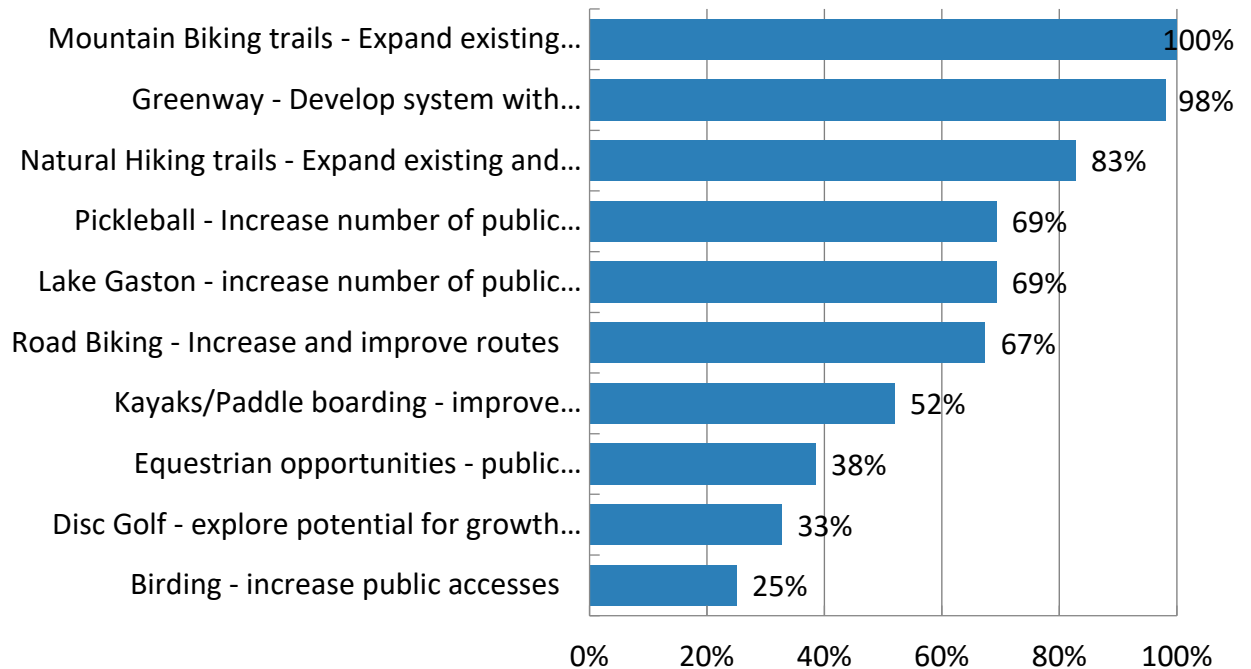
PRIORITIES SURVEY REVIEW

1) Please rank the following within the TOURISM & HOSPITALITY areas of growth with 1 being the highest priority and 6 being the lowest priority.



- Need to look at how to better track metrics around impact of tourism
- Quantify current tourism impact (\$\$) and visitor origin to be able to attract hotel(s) on I-85 exit
- Infrastructure challenges for long term stays. great for day trips
- Warren is still rich in Agriculture. People will come to visit farms & stay on the farms if option

2) Please rank the following the **OUTDOOR RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE** areas of growth with 1 being the highest priority and 10 being the lowest priority.



- Opportunity for public-private partnership for Lake Gaston public accesses
- Extend season – Shoulder seasons – Impacts – How?
- Alternative for “gateway”??
- Alignment with County Brand Guide (EDC)
- Organize implementation of action items based on timeframe to accomplish
- Rank from short-term to long-term
- Tie events closely to business community – How?

POSITIONING/VISION STATEMENT DRAFT REVIEW

DRAFT: Warren County, the Northeast Piedmont’s outdoor playground, with a perfect balance between Adventure and Escape, is the destination for active outdoor enthusiasts with breathless landscapes, endless natural trails, watersports, and a unique history.

- Is Northeast Piedmont appropriate geographic descriptor?
 - North Central North Carolina?
 - Halfway between Triangle & Richmond
- Not “breathless” --- breathtaking? Rural? Pastoral?
- Don’t need to qualify all
- Accessible?
- Pairing both water & trail
- Balance between water & land

Warren County Outdoor Recreation Positioning Statement

(Final revision by work group)

Warren County: North Carolina's perfect balance of land and water. The year-round adventure and escape destination for active outdoor enthusiasts, offering natural trails, watersports, rural landscapes, and unique history.

STRATEGIES

- Expand the access to trails and water
 - Improving trails at Buck Spring
 - Pump track/skills track
 - Leverage existing assets to continue to expand and increase opportunity for trail or water activities
 - Explore opportunities to acquire property (Objective)
 - John Hancock Forestry tract?
 - Strategic to maximize benefit to local economy

- Promote Unique History

- Year-round destination
 - Nestle historical and cultural promotion
 - Better understand/educate about how Warren County's history connects to Outdoor Recreation
- Include language about connectivity via "Sidepaths" which are multi-use (multi-modal) paths that are located exclusively adjacent to a roadway, typically within the road right of way.
- Connectivity between municipalities

- Expand & Strengthen Outdoor Recreation Business Infrastructure/Resources
 - Lodging
 - Workforce

- Progressively Preserve
 - Maintain & Actively preserve rural landscape and character
 - Mitigate encroachment of development
 - While maintaining potential for economic opportunity/local economic vitality
- Start planning now – either we control or someone else will
- Maintain Rural Quality of Life

PROCESS

- Encourage buy-in from all stakeholders
- All municipal elected leaders (all towns), business owners, civic organizations
- “Road Show” to ask for endorsement
- Buy-In
 - Provide examples of precedents and best practices from similar communities
 - Schedule field trip to show decision makers what is possible in similar places
 - Pocahontas, VA
 - Elkin NC
 - Others?
 - Unified between towns, county, Chamber and EDC board

Warrenton Town Board meets: 2nd Monday

Host road show before adoption

Roadshow then “unified adoption”

Develop an adoption sequence and timeline

###

Warren County/Warrenton Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)

10/10/23
10:00 – 11:30 am

Attendance In-person: Mike Coffman, Leanne Patrick, Rose Ponton, Robert Davie; Bruce Naegelen; Via Zoom: Dave Blodgett, Kyle Burwell, David McRae

Group met at Warrenton Town Hall

Rose & Bruce led discussion/review of “Vote with Dollars” results at Stakeholder Breakfast Event, CORE Business/Stakeholder Questionnaire results and,

Rose led review of 10/4/23 Implementation Plan draft.

Rose & Charla (Duncan) revised/streamlined the draft Bruce sent 10/4/23. Significant changes include:

- The plan shows Goals, Strategies, Objectives & Actions. Tasks will be included in the Appendix.
 - *Suggest including “responsible parties”*
- Economic Positioning/Vision Statement: *Still needs some wordsmithing*

Revised: Warren County is North Carolina’s *perfect balance of land and water*. A year-round haven for active outdoor enthusiasts - both locally and from just down the road - offering natural trails, watersports, country roads winding through rural landscapes, and unique history.

Original: Warren County is North Carolina’s perfect balance of land and water. The year-round adventure and escape destination for active outdoor enthusiasts, offering natural trails, watersports, rural landscapes, and unique history.

- Goals: Reduced to 3:
 - Goal 1: Year-Round Outdoor Recreation
 - Goal 2: Expand & Strengthen Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure
 - Goal 3: Develop the Outdoor Goods Producing Industry

Notes:

- Occupancy Tax/Warren County Tourism Development Authority
 - Who can help with TDA creation/Occupancy tax approval?
 - Rose said it didn't pass but check status and next steps to get adopted!
- David (McRae) talked about Implementation Services via CORE:
 - Funding Resource Guide *Outdoor Recreation Funding Sources & Resources*
 - Agreements with Universities to provide Technical Services, including NC State and NC Growth (UNC)
 - Funding will be available for Training/Conferences for CORE communities
- Funding for Grant Writing
 - Talk to Diane at Kerr-tar about grant-writing services
 - *From David McRae: Grant Administration – FWIW, many grants do allow a percentage of the funding to be used toward grant administration. Now, obviously you still must have a person, organization, or other entity that is competent and has time to handle this administration, but this helps to some extent.*
- Brian Eatmon has joined the Economic Development Department

Follow-up:

- Review David McRae revisions draft 10-9-23 in red
- Pursue grant funding opportunities
 - Outdoor Recreation Funding Sources & Resources – David sent following meeting
 - MSRPC Funding Guide
- Objective 1.2 – Improve economic impacts of existing festivals...
 - Research tracking systems
 - Pocket Sites App
 - Cell-phone trackers
- Objective 1.3 – *Increase visitation by 10% annually*
 - Change wording to be clear that this is for year-round. Would need to establish structure.
- Action 1.3a: Create, promote and expand reach of historic, cultural tours and buildings...

- Leanne said that 2026 is the nation's 250th birthday and communities are already planning events and activities. Robert mentioned that Warrenton and County will celebrate their founding in 2028.
- Action 25b: Add **Create or Develop** Access...
- Action 2.6a: Separate items into separate actions
- Renumber all items
- For presentation: Create a graphic showing how Outdoor Strategic Plan connects to many of the County Priorities (EDC, Parks & Recreation, Community Development, etc.)
- Set meeting with Rose, Charla, David & Bruce to review and make final changes



Warren County Retail Marketplace Snapshot August of 2023

The purpose of this report is to give Warren County the baseline information for a better understanding of its current market. The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center Staff studied the retail marketplace date within a 5, 10, 15- mile radii from central Warren County. The retail leakage analysis examines the quantitative aspects of the retail opportunities.

By reviewing the retail gap, we can:

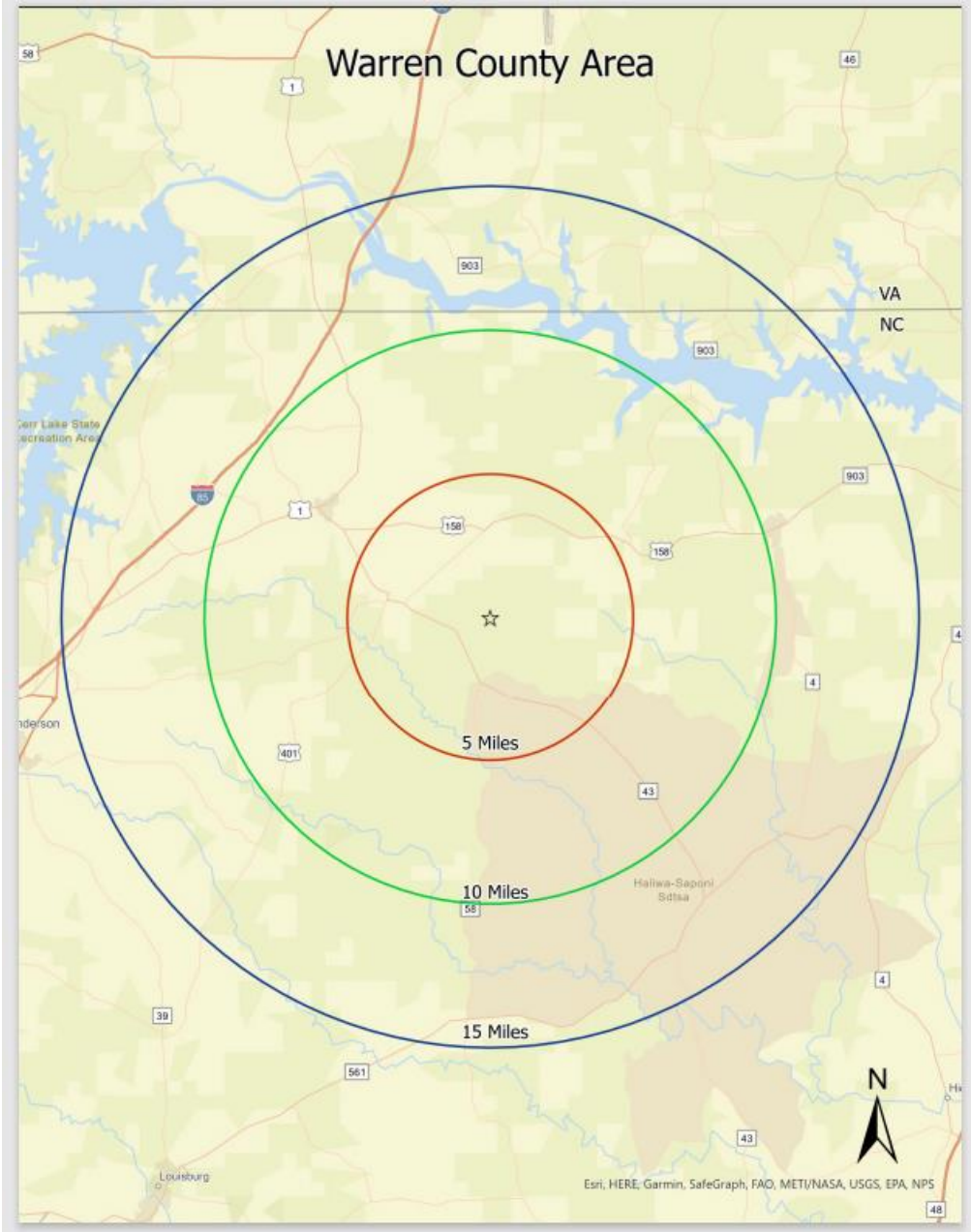
- Understand how well the retail needs of residents are being met.
- Uncover unmet demand and possible opportunities.
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the local retail sector.

When consumers spend their dollars outside the specific radii of Warren County this is known as “Retail Gap” throughout this report. Retail Gap or leakage indicates an **unmet demand in the trade area**. This suggests the possibility the community can support additional retail for those business categories. Residents within the specified primary trade areas are purchasing products outside that area indicating opportunity to capture those dollars within the downtown district.

There are also categories for which Warren County is exceeding the local market demand. Those are measured as red numbers on the below report. For the 5-mile, 10 mile and 15-mile radii of Warren County this means that the county is exceeding its market potential in these categories. This retail surplus means the community’s trade area is capturing local market plus attracting non-local shoppers. Surplus means the community has possibly developed strong clusters of retail that have broad geographical appeal.

You can also seek additional retail market data that the Warren County Economic Development Commission or the Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments can provide. This report is based on the data collected and should serve as a starting point for your economic vitality efforts.

We highly encourage you to couple this report with consumer surveys to get a complete understanding of the Warren County potential. The NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center can share examples of consumer surveys and assist with this process as needed.



The above Warren County map outlines the two trade areas within a 5-, 10- and 15-mile radii of Warren County. Defining the downtown trade area is critical in determining retail opportunities for the downtown market. The NC Main Street & Rural Center staff only reviewed the data within these three segments. Warren County should be targeting residents within these two areas. The goal is to capture the retail sales volume leaking to neighboring communities, such as Henderson. The chart below shows total industry summaries for the 5-,

10- and 15-mile radii of Warren County. It details the total retail sales gap, potential 10% capture and retail square footage needed to attract this sales volume.

The sales per square foot column in the charts is the average number based on recent research across the state. Typically, restaurant annual retail sales are higher than \$300 per square foot. There are variables that impact this number such as building owned versus rented, rental rates either higher or lower as well as overall expenses, such as employee wages, insurance, utilities, etc. **Surplus is shown as a red number and retail gap is shown as a black number.**

Distance	Total Retail Gap	10% Capture	Sales/SF	S.F. Needed
5-mile radius	\$9,124,456	\$ 912,446	\$300	3,041
10-mile radius	\$41,533,186	\$4,153,319	\$300	13,844
15-mile radius	\$98,346,252	\$9,834,625	\$300	32,782

The above chart shows the aggregate number of potential sales within the 5-, 10- and 15-mile radius of Warren County. Below you will see these number broken down by retail category.

5-Mile Radius Around Warren County

Warren County				
Primary Trade Area 5-mile around downtown	DOWNTOWN POTENTIAL			
Business Type	Retail Gap	10% of Retail Gap	Sales/SF	SF
		10%	\$300	Needed
Home Centers	\$ 1,797,193	\$ 179,719	\$ 300	599
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	\$ 1,238,672	\$ 123,867	\$ 300	413
Women's Clothing Stores	\$ 295,913	\$ 29,591	\$ 300	99
Family Clothing Stores	\$ 273,602	\$ 27,360	\$ 300	91
Shoe Stores	\$ 263,947	\$ 26,395	\$ 300	88
Jewelry Stores	\$ 330,596	\$ 33,060	\$ 300	110
Department Stores	\$ 820,246	\$ 82,025	\$ 300	273
Pet and Pet Supply Stores	\$ 200,298	\$ 20,030	\$ 300	67
Drinking Places	\$ 250,337	\$ 25,034	\$ 300	83
Full Service Restaurants	\$ 1,021,894	\$ 102,189	\$ 300	341
Limited-Service Restaurants	\$ 2,631,758	\$ 263,176	\$ 300	877
Total Gap	\$ 9,124,456	\$ 912,446	\$ 300	3,041

10-Mile Radius Around Warren County

Warren County				
Primary Trade Area 10-Mile Radius around downtown		DOWNTOWN POTENTIAL		
Business Type	Retail Gap	10% of Retail Gap	Sales/SF	SF
		10%	\$300	Needed
Furniture Stores	\$ 2,048,160	\$ 204,816	\$ 300	683
Home Furnishings Stores	\$ 415,851	\$ 41,585	\$ 300	139
Electronics Stores	\$ 1,887,350	\$ 188,735	\$ 300	629
Home Centers	\$ 6,542,327	\$ 654,233	\$ 300	2,181
Paint and Wallpaper Stores	\$ 504,746	\$ 50,475	\$ 300	168
Hardware Stores	\$ 469,113	\$ 46,911	\$ 300	156
Nursery, Garden and Farm Supply Stores	\$ 809,150	\$ 80,915	\$ 300	270
Specialty Food Stores	\$ 675,074	\$ 67,507	\$ 300	225
Cosmetics and Beauty Supply Stores	\$ 469,758	\$ 46,976	\$ 300	157
Women's Clothing Stores	\$ 1,015,412	\$ 101,541	\$ 300	338
Family Clothing Stores	\$ 2,340,906	\$ 234,091	\$ 300	780
Shoe Stores	\$ 896,380	\$ 89,638	\$ 300	299
Jewelry Stores	\$ 1,133,145	\$ 113,315	\$ 300	378
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	\$ 549,459	\$ 54,946	\$ 300	183
Sporting Goods Stores	\$ 922,268	\$ 92,227	\$ 300	307
Department Stores	\$ 2,811,249	\$ 281,125	\$ 300	937
Office and Stationary Stores	\$ 331,177	\$ 33,118	\$ 300	110
Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	\$ 398,609	\$ 39,861	\$ 300	133
Pet and Pet Supplies Stores	\$ 696,799	\$ 69,680	\$ 300	232
Drinking Places	\$ 865,800	\$ 86,580	\$ 300	289
Full-Service Restaurants	\$ 6,669,615	\$ 666,962	\$ 300	2,223
Limited-Service Restaurants	\$ 9,080,838	\$ 908,084	\$ 300	3,027
Total Gap	\$ 41,533,186	\$ 4,153,319	\$ 300	13,844

15-Mile Radius Around Warren County

Warren County				
Primary Trade Area 15-mile radius around downtown		DOWNTOWN POTENTIAL		
Business Type	Retail Gap	10% of Retail Gap	Sales/SF	SF
		10%	\$300	Needed
Furniture Stores	\$ 4,980,595	\$ 498,060	\$ 300	1,660
Home Furnishing Stores	\$ 3,137,270	\$ 313,727	\$ 300	1,046
Appliance Stores	\$ 1,253,158	\$ 125,316	\$ 300	418
Electronics Stores	\$ 6,163,850	\$ 616,385	\$ 300	2,055
Home Centers	\$ 9,807,335	\$ 980,734	\$ 300	3,269
Specialty Food Stores	\$ 1,633,943	\$ 163,394	\$ 300	545
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	\$ 4,540,675	\$ 454,068	\$ 300	1,514
Cosmetics and Beauty Supply Stores	\$ 1,094,533	\$ 109,453	\$ 300	365
Women's Clothing Stores	\$ 2,619,390	\$ 261,939	\$ 300	873
Family Clothing Stores	\$ 6,823,628	\$ 682,363	\$ 300	2,275
Shoe Stores	\$ 2,102,009	\$ 210,201	\$ 300	701
Jewelry Stores	\$ 2,464,376	\$ 246,438	\$ 300	821
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	\$ 1,583,060	\$ 158,306	\$ 300	528
Sporting Goods Stores	\$ 2,710,947	\$ 271,095	\$ 300	904
Hobby, Toy and Game Stores	\$ 894,377	\$ 89,438	\$ 300	298
Department Stores	\$ 1,542,559	\$ 154,256	\$ 300	514
Office Supplies and Stationary Stores	\$ 704,472	\$ 70,447	\$ 300	235
Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	\$ 922,809	\$ 92,281	\$ 300	308
Used Merchandise Stores	\$ 792,958	\$ 79,296	\$ 300	264
Pet and Pet Supplies Stores	\$ 1,549,175	\$ 154,918	\$ 300	516
Drinking Places	\$ 2,472,093	\$ 247,209	\$ 300	824
Full-Service Restaurants	\$ 17,739,058	\$ 1,773,906	\$ 300	5,913
Limited-Service Restaurants	\$ 20,813,982	\$ 2,081,398	\$ 300	6,938
Total Gap	\$ 98,346,252	\$ 9,834,625	\$ 300	32,782

5-Mile Radius Retail Surplus

Category	Retail Surplus
Home Furnishings Stores	\$ 612,524
Appliance Stores	\$ 282,555
Grocery Stores	\$ 2,108,019
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	\$ 484,737
Book Stores	\$ 327,797
Florists	\$ 189,558
Total	\$ 4,005,190

10-Mile Radius Retail Surplus

Category	Retail Surplus
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	\$ 4,870,931
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	\$ 7,997,493
Book Stores	\$ 238,705
Total	\$ 13,107,129

15-Mile Radius Retail Surplus

Paint and Wallpaper Stores	\$ 2,039,914
Hardware Stores	\$ 1,187,850
Nursery, and Garden Supply Stores	\$ 3,892,958
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	\$ 5,651,169
Total	\$ 12,771,891

The retail surpluses confirm that Warren County is attracting a disproportionate amount of retail sales in these categories and potential exists to attract additional retail and restaurant establishments to take advantage of the additional business potential.

Below are two tables showing the projected sales growth in different commercial categories. This information can help your recruitment process.

5-Mile Measurement

Warren County Demand Growth by Retail Store Types				
Primary Trade Area 5-mile radius around downtown	DOWNTOWN POTENTIAL			Compound
Business Type	2023	2028	Growth	Growth
	Demand	Demand	\$	Rate (%)
Home Centers	\$ 2,075,954	\$ 2,336,142	\$ 260,188	2
Grocery Stores	\$ 6,514,901	\$ 7,117,270	\$ 602,370	2
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	\$ 2,812,478	\$ 2,974,982	\$ 162,505	1
Full Service Restaurants	\$ 3,128,664	\$ 3,362,176	\$ 223,513	1
Limited Service Restaurants	\$ 2,631,758	\$ 2,816,536	\$ 184,778	1
Total Sales	\$ 17,163,755	\$ 18,607,106	\$ 1,433,354	

Note: The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is the annualized average rate of revenue growth between two given years, assuming growth takes place at an exponentially compounded rate. The most important factor in both charts is the amount of projected growth per category.

10-Mile Measurement

Warren County Demand Growth by Retail Store Types				
Primary Trade Area: 10 mile radius around downtown				
Business Type	2023	2028	Growth	Compound
	Demand	Demand	\$	Rate (%)
Furniture Stores	\$ 2,499,769	\$ 2,659,342	\$ 159,573	1
Home Furnishings Stores	\$ 1,802,793	\$ 1,965,877	\$ 163,083	2
Electronics Stores	\$ 2,334,190	\$ 2,494,663	\$ 160,474	1
Home Centers	\$ 7,163,984	\$ 8,087,715	\$ 923,732	2
Paint and Wallpaper Stores	\$ 504,746	\$ 650,666	\$ 145,920	5
Hardware Stores	\$ 1,052,936	\$ 1,190,881	\$ 137,945	2
Nursery, Garden Center and Farm Supply Stores	\$ 1,354,184	\$ 1,479,447	\$ 125,263	2
Grocery Stores	\$ 22,420,791	\$ 24,688,118	\$ 2,247,326	2
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores	\$ 2,050,896	\$ 2,264,344	\$ 213,447	2
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	\$ 9,684,291	\$ 10,300,458	\$ 616,167	1
Full Service Restaurants	\$ 10,800,507	\$ 11,589,089	\$ 788,582	1
Limited Service Restaurants	\$ 9,080,838	\$ 9,711,918	\$ 631,080	1
Total Sales	\$ 70,749,925	\$ 77,082,518	\$ 6,312,592	

Note: The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is the annualized average rate of revenue growth between two given years, assuming growth takes place at an exponentially compounded rate. The most important factor in both charts is the amount of projected growth per category.

15 Mile Measurement

Warren County Demand Growth by Retail Store Types				
Primary Trade Area: 15 mile radius around downtown				
Business Type	2023	2028	Growth	Compound
	Demand	Demand	\$	Rate (%)
Furniture Stores	\$ 7,217,716	\$ 7,656,684	\$ 438,967	1
Home Furnishings Stores	\$ 5,162,113	\$ 5,687,258	\$ 525,145	2
Appliance Stores	\$ 1,893,037	\$ 2,053,497	\$ 160,460	2
Electronics Stores	\$ 6,720,449	\$ 7,228,118	\$ 507,669	1
Home Centers	\$ 20,649,461	\$ 23,258,491	\$ 2,609,030	2
Paint and Wallpaper Stores	\$ 1,453,736	\$ 1,876,896	\$ 423,160	5
Hardware Stores	\$ 3,036,823	\$ 3,423,962	\$ 387,139	2
Nursery, Garden Center and Farm Supply Stores	\$ 3,906,201	\$ 4,269,050	\$ 362,849	2
Grocery Stores	\$ 64,608,657	\$ 71,597,571	\$ 6,988,913	2
Specialty Food Stores	\$ 1,945,514	\$ 2,155,224	\$ 209,710	2
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores	\$ 5,890,113	\$ 6,572,256	\$ 682,243	2
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	\$ 27,958,961	\$ 29,762,617	\$ 1,803,656	1
Cosmetics and Beauty Supply Stores	\$ 1,949,210	\$ 2,086,740	\$ 137,530	1
Hobby, Toy and Game Stores	\$ 1,772,321	\$ 1,896,349	\$ 124,028	1
Office Supplies and Stationary Stores	\$ 955,110	\$ 1,069,798	\$ 114,689	2
Pet and Pet Supply Stores	\$ 2,006,081	\$ 2,267,227	\$ 261,146	2
Drinking Places	\$ 2,480,102	\$ 2,724,235	\$ 244,132	2
Full Service Restaurants	\$ 31,107,896	\$ 33,574,790	\$ 2,466,894	2
Limited Service Restaurants	\$ 26,194,173	\$ 28,155,021	\$ 1,960,848	1
Total Sales	\$ 216,907,674	\$ 237,315,784	\$ 20,408,208	

Note: The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is the annualized average rate of revenue growth

between two given years, assuming growth takes place at an exponentially compounded rate. The most important factor in both charts is the amount of projected growth per category.

Retail Sales per Capita (Source: U.S. Census QuickFacts)

Total retail sales per capita for Warren County in 2017 (the last measured year on this site) are \$4,723 which are 34.3% of the NC average of \$13,735 and 31.0% of the U.S. per capita average of \$15,224. Warren County annual retail sales for 2017 were \$93,657,000. This indicates a significant amount of retail sales escaping Warren County for neighboring communities. Based on the local geography, Henderson or Vance County seems to be the primary recipient of potential Warren County consumers. Note that Warren County produces only the equivalent of 20% of total Vance County annual retail sales.

Total retail sales per capita for Henderson in 2017 were \$29,661 which is more than twice that of the Vance County (\$13,233) and NC (\$13,225) averages and almost twice that of the U.S. average of \$15,224. Additionally, Henderson produces \$447,027,000 in annual retail sales and 76% of Vance County retail sales while only accounting for 35% of the county population.

The main message from this data is that Warren County should identify businesses to be recruited to stem the retail sales losses that are apparent in this report.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Median Household Income

\$42,515

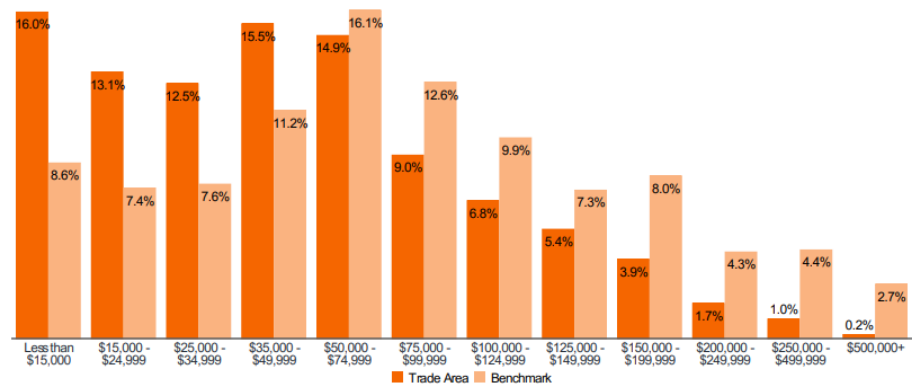
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Average Household Income

\$61,172

Index:58

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION



Benchmark:USA

*Ranked by percent composition

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Index Colors:	<80	80 - 110	110+
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HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Median Household Income

\$42,485

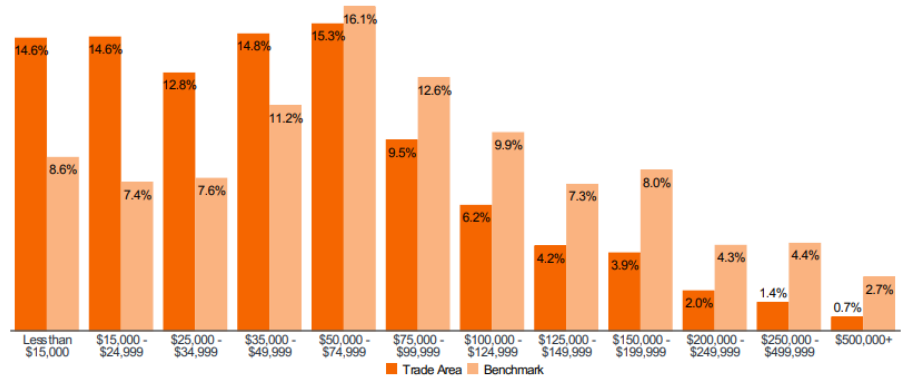
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Average Household Income

\$64,613

Index:62

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION



Benchmark:USA

*Ranked by percent composition

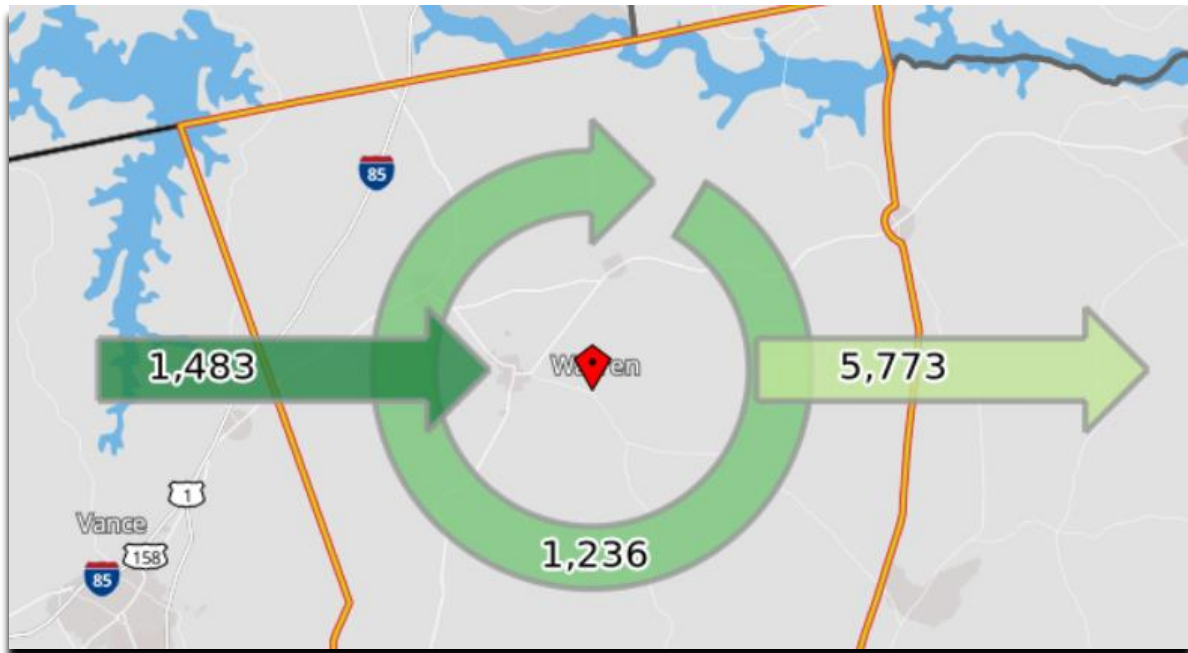
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Index Colors:	<80	80 - 110	110+
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Claritas 5-mile and 10-mile radius income distributions

	<u>5-Mile Radius</u>	<u>10-Mile Radius</u>
Median Household Income:	\$42,515	\$42,405
Average Household Income:	\$61,172	\$64,744
Highest Income Distribution	\$15,000 and below (16.0%)	\$50,000-\$74,999 (15.3%)
% of population below \$50,000	57.2%	51.9%
% of population above \$50,000	42.9%	14.8%

The positive fact is the highest income distribution is \$50,000-\$74,999 at the 10-mile radius from central Warren County. The challenging facts are the highest income range being \$15,000 and below for those living within 5-miles of central Warren County and the majority of populations at both measurements earning below \$50,000.



(U.S. Census On the Map)

- 1,483 workers enter Warren County daily.
- 1,236 workers live and work in Warren County daily.
- 5,773 workers leave Warren County for employment daily.

The best way to draw workers into Warren County is via the development of the Triangle North Warren Mega Site. Ideally, you want to have more workers entering Warren County than what currently happening with considerably more workers leaving daily than entering.

Tapestry Segmentation identified by ESRI On-Line Business Analyst

We find that studying the Tapestry Segments helps to identify a retail mix based on demographics that could enhance the shopping experience. Tapestry Segmentations provide detailed descriptions of America's neighborhoods. U.S. residential areas are divided into 67 distinctive segments based on their socioeconomic and demographic composition, then further classifies the segments into LifeMode and Urbanization Groups. Each radius has numerous LifeMode groups for a total of 100%. The detailed information can give Warren County a sense of who its customer is and insight into how to market to and what types of products to possibly add to existing inventory. By diving deeper into each Tapestry Segment's LifeMode and Urbanization Group there may be an entirely new business that could emerge and possibly be a good fit for downtown.

The information provided reflects the U.S. characteristics. The table below shows the top three segments for each category with brief descriptions. Detailed descriptions are obtained by going to the raw ESRI data's Tapestry information and clicking on each segment for the specific drive times. Visit <http://doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation>

Top 3 Tapestries for each location

5-Mile Radius		10-Mile Radius		15-Mile Radius	
Rural Bypasses	69.9%	Rural Bypasses	78.2%	Rural Bypasses	61.4%
Senior Escapes	26.5%	Rural Resort		Rural Resort	
Rural Resort		Dwellers	14.0%	Dwellers	14.1%
Dwellers	3.6%	Senior Escapes	7.7%	Senior Escapes	9.0%

Rural Bypasses is the largest segment in each of the three measurements. Senior Escapes is the second largest segment of those living within a 5-mile radius of the county. Rural Resort Dwellers is the third largest segment at the 5-mile measurement and the second largest segment for those living within the 10-mile and 15-mile radius respectively. Each of these segments will be addressed below:

Rural Bypasses	Total Households (U.S.)	1,646,400
	Average Household Size	2.55
	Median Age	40.4
	Average HH Income	\$33,000

WHO ARE WE?

Open space, undeveloped land, and farmland characterize Rural Bypasses. These families live within small towns along country back roads and enjoy the open air in these sparsely populated neighborhoods. Their country lifestyle focuses on the outdoors, gardening, hunting, and fishing. They are more likely to own a satellite dish than a home computer. Although most households do have a connection to the internet, use is very limited. Those who are not yet retired work in blue-collar jobs in the agriculture or manufacturing industries.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Almost 25% have not finished high school; 11% have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Labor force participation is low at 47%.
- Income is primarily derived from wages and supplemented with Social Security and Supplemental Security Incomes.
- Religion and faith are central in their lives.
- They rely on television to stay informed.

Senior Escapes	Total Households (U.S.)	1,116,000
	Average Household Size	2.20
	Median Age	54.6
	Average HH Income	\$38,700

WHO ARE WE?

Senior Escapes neighborhoods are heavily concentrated in the warmer states of Florida, California, and Arizona. These areas are highly seasonal, yet owner occupied. Many homes began as seasonal getaways and now serve as primary residences. Nearly 40% are mobile homes; over half are single-family dwellings. About half are in unincorporated and more rural areas. Nearly one-fifth of the population is between 65 and 74 years old. Residents enjoy watching TV, going on cruises, playing trivia games, bicycling, boating, and fishing. They are very conscious of their health and buy specialty foods and dietary supplements.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Labor force participation is low, but more than half the households are drawing Social Security income.
- They spend majority of their time with spouse or significant other or alone.
- They are limited by medical conditions but still enjoy gardening and working on their vehicles.
- They take good care of vehicles but haven't bought a new one in over five years.
- They only spend within their means, do their banking in person, and do not carry a balance on their credit card.

Rural Resort Dwellers	Total Households (U.S.)	1,227,200
	Average Household Size	2.22
	Median Age	54.1
	Average HH Income	\$50,400

WHO ARE WE?

Although the Great Recession forced many owners of second homes to sell, Rural Resort Dwellers residents remain an active market, just a bit smaller. These communities are centered in resort areas, many in the Midwest, where the change in seasons supports a variety of outdoor activities. Retirement looms for many of these blue collar, older householders, but workers are postponing retirement or returning to work to maintain their current lifestyles. Workers are traveling further to maintain employment. They are passionate about their hobbies, like freshwater fishing and hunting.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Rural Resort Dwellers residents are close to retirement. They've accumulated wealth and begun to shift their portfolios to low-risk assets. These active residents continue to work in skilled occupations.
- Simple tastes and modesty characterize these blue-collar residents. They shop for timeless, comfortable clothing but only when something must be replaced. They pay little attention to advertising and usually stick to the brands they know.
- They spend time with their spouses and also maintain a social calendar.

AARP Livability Index

The AARP Livability Index for Warren County is 37 on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. The higher the score the more livable the community. Warren County ranks below average on this scale. It is important to consider the different index categories, such as health, environment, neighborhood, and opportunity to help you determine what needs to be done to improve this score. Some areas of particular interest include:

The positive.....

<u>Category</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2022 Median U.S. Neighborhood</u>
Housing (49 out of 100)		
Zero-Step Entrances	50.1%	50.1%
Availability of subsidized housing (Units per 10,000)	0	0
Housing Costs	\$702	\$1,057
Neighborhoods (16 out of 100)		
Access to Grocery Stores & Farmer's Mkts	0	0.0
Access to libraries	0	0
Access to Jobs by Transit	0	0
Transportation (43 out of 100)		
Frequency of Local Transit (Buses and trains per hour)	0	0
ADA-Accessible stations and vehicles	82.9%	82.9%
Congestion (Hours per person per year)	0	25.5
Speed Limits (Miles/Hour)	26.8	28.0
Environment (65 out of 100)		
Drinking Water Quality (% of people exposed to violations)	0.00%	0%

<u>Category</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2022 Median U.S. Neighborhood</u>
Environment (65 out of 100)		
Local Industrial Pollution (ORSE score from 0 to 9,070)	0.00	0.00
Near-Roadway Pollution (% of people exposed)	0.00%	0.00%
Engagement (14 out of 100)		
Opportunity for Civic Involvement (Number of organizations per 10,000 ppl.)	13.2	1.18
Voting Rate (% of people voting)	67.3%	61.9%
Social Involvement Index (Index 0 to 2.5)	1.01	0.96
Opportunity (10 out of 100)		
Age Diversity (Index 0 to 1)	0.86	0.85
The negative.....		
Housing (49 out of 100)		
Housing Cost Burden (Percentage of income spent on housing)	16.5%	16.3%
Availability of multi-family housing (% of units multi-family)	3.1%	18%
Neighborhood (16 out of 100)		
Access to jobs by auto	632	44,198
Access to Parks	0	1
Diversity of Destinations (Index from 0 to 1)	0	0.65
Activity Density (Jobs and people per square mile)	11	3,056

<u>Category</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2022 Median U.S. Neighborhood</u>
Neighborhood (16 out of 100)		
Crime Rate (Crimes per 10,000 people)	250	217.4
Vacancy Rate (% of units vacant)	52%	8.6%
Transportation (43 out of 100)		
Household transportation costs (Amount per year)	\$16,179	\$15,331
Crash Rate (Fatal crashes per 10,000 people per year)	24.7	7.7
Walk Trips (Trips per household per day)	0.47	0.73
Environment (65 out of 100)		
Regional Air Quality (Unhealthy air quality days per year)	4.4	4.37
Health (14 out of 100)		
Smoking prevalence (% of pop. who smoke)	28.5%	18%
Obesity prevalence (% of adults who are obese)	43.4%	32.2%
Access to exercise equipment (% of people who have access)	38.2%	90.1%
Healthcare Professional Shortage Areas (Index from 0 to 26)	20	0
Preventable Hospitalization Rate (Preventable hospitalization rate per 1,000 patients)	67.6	48.5
Patient Satisfaction Rate (% of patients satisfied)	54.0%	71.8%

<u>Category</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2022 Median U.S. Neighborhood</u>
Engagement (58 out of 100)		
Broadband Cost and Speed (% of residents who have competitively priced, high-speed internet)	32.6%	93.7%
Cultural, arts and entertainment institutions (Institutions per 100 people)	0.2	8.01
Opportunity (10 out of 100)		
Income Inequality (Index from 0 to 1)	0.5	0.46
Jobs per Worker (Jobs per worker)	0.31	0.80
High School Graduation Rate	72.0%	88.5%

Summary and Recommendations

1. Retail Gap

At the 5-, 10-, and 15-mile radius, retail gaps are seen in home centers, women’s and family clothing, shoes, jewelry, department stores, pet, and pet supply stores, drinking places, full and limited-service restaurants. Additionally, at the 10- and 15-mile radius measurements, retail gaps were seen in furniture, home furnishings, electronics, specialty foods, cosmetics, luggage and leather goods, sporting goods, office supplies and gifts, novelty, and souvenir stores. At only the 10-mile radius measurement, retail gaps were seen in hardware and nursery, garden, and farm supplies. At just the 15-mile measurement, retail gaps are seen in appliances, electronics, hobby, toy, and games, used merchandise, and gifts, novelty and souvenirs.

Retail Gaps-Claritas 5-mile, 10-mile and 15-mile radii

<u>Categories</u>	<u>5-Mile</u>	<u>10-Mile</u>	<u>15-Mile</u>
Home Centers	\$1,797,193	\$6,542,327	\$ 9,807,335
Pharmacies	\$1,238,672	-----	\$ 4,540,675
Women’s Clothing	\$ 295,913	\$1,015,412	\$ 2,619,390
Family Clothing	\$ 273,602	\$2,340,906	\$ 6,823,628
Shoes	\$ 263,947	\$ 896,830	\$ 2,102,009
Jewelry	\$ 330,596	\$1,133,145	\$ 2,464,376
Department Stores	\$ 820,246	\$2,811,249	\$ 1,542,559
Pet and Pet Supplies	\$ 200,208	\$ 696,799	\$ 1,549,175
Drinking Places	\$ 250,339	\$ 865,800	\$ 2,472,093
Full-Service Restaurants	\$1,021,894	\$6,669,615	\$17,739,051
Limited-Service Restaurants	\$2,631,758	\$9,080,838	\$20,813,982

Intersection of Retail Gaps and Projected Growth-Claritas

Below are two categories that show both current retail gaps and projected retail growth. For prospective business owners, it is beneficial to have both current retail potential (gap) and projected sales growth:

Category	Retail Gap			Projected Growth		
	<u>5-Mile</u>	<u>10-Mile</u>	<u>15-Mile</u>	<u>5-Mile</u>	<u>10-Mile</u>	<u>15-Mile</u>
Full-Service Restaurants	\$1,021,894	\$6,669,615	\$17,739,051	\$223,813	\$788,582	\$2,466,894
Limited Service Restaurants	\$2,631,758	\$9,080,838	\$20,813,982	\$184,778	\$631,080	\$1,960,848

2. Retail Surplus

At all three measurements show retail surpluses are seen in beer, wine, and liquor. At the 5-mile measurement surpluses were seen in home furnishings, appliances, groceries, books, and florists. At the 10-mile measurement, surpluses were seen in pharmacies and books and at the 15-mile measurement surpluses were seen in paint and wallpaper, hardware, and nursery, garden, and farm supply stores.

The Norlina Food Lion, Norlina Hardware and appliance, Food Lion pharmacy, Walgreens (Warrenton) and independent furniture/home furnishing stores (Furniture Depot, Warrenton Furniture Exchange, Oakley Hall Antiques and Art, Roost Cross Roads Antiques) contribute to these surpluses.

3. Recommended Strategies

a. Triangle North Warren Mega Site

Retail development either follows job creation, tourism, or residential development. For Warren County, the Triangle North Warren Mega Site offers the best opportunity for industrial development and job creation. Once a tenant enters the park, others should follow, creating the jobs required to support retail development.

b. Tourism Development

Lake Gaston and Kerr Lake access, two wineries, agritourism, and municipal parks provide desired amenities for visitors and residents.

c. Residential Development

Many NC counties are including residential development into their workplans as North Carolina is a popular location for mobile workers and retirees from other states. This development should be focused on the lakes and close to the communities of Norlina and Warrenton that have support businesses and could welcome more. A 2016 study of amenities required by residents identified the following three:

1. Parks and green spaces
2. Paved trail systems for walking, jogging, biking, etc.
3. Main street village centers with retail services and cafes for gathering and socializing.

Warren County should be pursuing the top three amenities shown in this study which are expected from residents of all ages. The anticipate expansion of broadband in the county will be a tremendous incentive for those who wish to escape higher populated areas for more affordable rural locations but require internet access either for employment or just as an everyday convenience.

d. Commercial Development

The NC Department of Commerce cannot endorse companies to be employed by municipalities or counties, but Carolina Commercial is a commercial real estate company that specializes in smaller town commercial development. If Warren County determines it would be beneficial to pursue their expertise, the company principal is Lash Hairston who can be reached at 910-733-0540 or lash@carolina-commercial.com

Outdoor Recreation

Since Lake Gaston and Kerr Lake are in Warren County, retailers who support outdoor recreation are needed and will provide sales tax revenue to the county. There are a few ways to approach recruitment of such businesses:

- Canvas neighboring lake or river outfitters to see if they would like to open an additional location in Warren County. There seems to be a particular need for outfitters to support fishing.
- Social media can be useful in seeking those prospective business owners who may want to open an outdoor recreation business. It is recommended to share this need on social media and learn of potential entrepreneurs who wish to pursue such a business.
- The Warren County Chamber of Commerce in concert with the Vance Granville Community College could schedule a series of meetings with prospective entrepreneurs in outdoor recreation or other retail categories to provide guidance on how to open and successfully operate businesses.
 - A short story reveals how profitable an outdoor recreation business can be. Madison, NC is a small community of 2100 people on the Dan River in western Rockingham County. During the 2020 COVID shutdowns, its parks and recreation department could not program group activities. Seeking an activity to offer its residents, it purchased several tubes, a 15-passenger van, and a trailer. It offered tubing trips down the Dan River, ending in Downtown Madison. The program moved 4,000 people down the river and netted

\$30,000 in profit. This is just one example of the potential success of such a program.

There is additional Claritas retail data and the U.S. Census Quickfacts report to support your retail recruitment efforts.

If you have any questions concerning the above information, do not hesitate to contact Downtown Development Specialist Mike Dougherty at mike.dougherty@commerce.nc.gov or 919-817-7086.

Sources: Claritas Retail Data

<http://doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation>

Livabilityindex.aarp.org

Warren County map—Glen Locascio, NC Department of Commerce



Invest in Warren County, NC

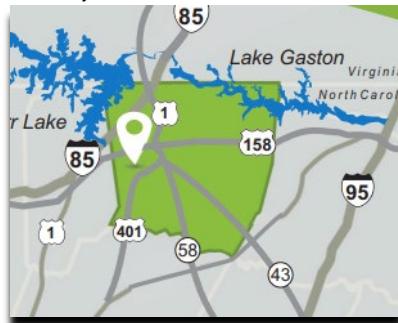
Warren County Demographics (Claritas 2023)

	<u>5-Mile Radius</u>	<u>10-Mile Radius</u>
• Median Household Income:	\$42,515	\$42,405
• Average Household Income:	\$61,172	\$64,744
• Highest Income Distribution	\$50,000-\$74,999 (15.3%) at 10-mile radius	

Accessibility

- 4, I-85 exits

Triangle North Warren Mega Park: 1,036 Acres with all utilities and rail service.



Area Attractions

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Lake Gaston | Kerr Lake |
| • Buck Spring Park | Little Man Memorial Park |
| • Magnolia Ernest Recreational Park | Keats Point Farm |
| • Rotary Park | Warrenton Golf Club |

Retail Gaps: Sales potential in various categories below:

<u>Categories</u>	<u>5-Mile</u>	<u>10-Mile</u>	<u>15-Mile</u>
Home Centers	\$1,797,193	\$6,542,327	\$ 9,807,335
Pharmacies	\$1,238,672		\$ 4,540,675
Women's Clothing	\$ 295,913	\$1,015,412	\$ 2,619,390
Family Clothing	\$ 273,602	\$2,340,906	\$ 6,823,628

Shoes	\$ 263,947	\$ 896,830	\$ 2,102,009
Jewelry	\$ 330,596	\$1,133,145	\$ 2,464,376
Department Stores	\$ 820,246	\$2,811,249	\$ 1,542,559
Pet and Pet Supplies	\$ 200,208	\$ 696,799	\$ 1,549,175
Drinking Places	\$ 250,339	\$ 865,800	\$ 2,472,093
Full-Service Restaurants	\$1,021,894	\$6,669,615	\$17,739,051
Limited-Service Restaurants	\$2,631,758	\$9,080,838	\$20,813,982

Available Properties:

Contact: Charla Duncan, Director of Community and Economic Development at 252-257-3115 or charladuncan@warrencountync.gov



Invest in Warren County, NC

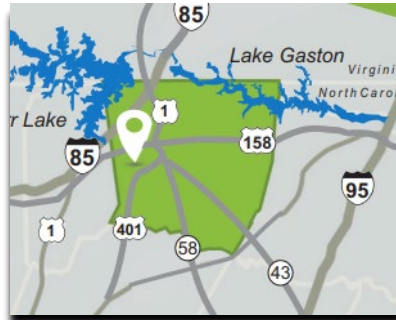
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- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
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| • Buck Spring Park | Little Man Memorial Park |
| • Magnolia Ernest Recreational Park | Keats Point Farm |
| • Rotary Park | Warrenton Golf Club |

Restaurant Retail Gaps-Claritas 2023

<u>Category</u>	<u>Retail Gap</u>			<u>Projected Growth</u>		
	<u>5-Mile</u>	<u>10-Mile</u>	<u>15-Mile</u>	<u>5-Mile</u>	<u>10-Mile</u>	<u>15-Mile</u>
Full-Service Restaurants	\$1,021,894	\$6,669,615	\$17,739,051	\$223,813	\$788,582	\$2,466,894

<u>Category</u>	Retail Gap			Projected Growth		
	<u>5-Mile</u>	<u>10-Mile</u>	<u>15-Mile</u>	<u>5-Mile</u>	<u>10-Mile</u>	<u>15-Mile</u>
Limited Service Restaurants	\$2,631,758	\$9,080,838	\$20,813,982	\$184,778	\$631,080	\$1,960,848

Available Properties:

Contact: Charla Duncan, Director of Community and Economic Development at 252-257-3115 or charladuncan@warrencountync.gov



WARREN COUNTY

CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2029



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	4
Background	5
Setting	6
Existing Plan Review	8
Planning Process	10
○ Situational Analysis	
○ Local Work Group Establishment and Involvement	
○ Asset Mapping	
○ Public Engagement	
○ Economic Positioning Statement & Development	12
○ CORE Strategic Plan Review & Adoption	12
CORE Strategy and Implementation Plan Summary	13
Plan Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation	16
Appendix	<i>Separate Document</i>

Acknowledgements

The Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) program is made possible by a U.S. Economic Development Administration State Tourism Grant which awarded \$6 Million to the State of North Carolina’s Supporting and Strengthening Resiliency in North Carolina’s Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Sectors Initiative. As a component of this Initiative, the North Carolina Department of Commerce’s Rural Economic Development Division (REDD) developed the CORE program. The CORE program offers strategic planning and technical assistance to help rural communities leverage North Carolina’s abundant outdoor recreation assets to bolster local economic vitality.



**NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE**
RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



The REDD announced the technical assistance program offering Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Planning and Asset Development services in late 2022. Communities from across the state applied to engage with strategic planning services and 34 local governments were accepted to participate. Main Street & Rural Planning (MS&RP) staff, who is responsible for facilitating strategic economic development planning and implementation services, worked with local government staff to communicate the goals of the program, identify local opportunities, and assemble a planning work group. The CORE strategic planning process for Warren County and the Town of Warrenton was combined for efficiency, although separate reports and implementation plans were developed.

Warren County Board of Commissioners

Bertadean Baker, Chair & District 4
Jennifer Jordan Pierce, District 1
Tare “T” Davis, District 2
Victor Hunt, District 3
Walter Powell, District 5
Vincent Jones, *Warren County Manager*

Warren County Outdoor Recreation Economy Planning Committee

Dave Blodgett, *Lake Gaston Outfitters*
Kyle Burwell, *Vance-Granville Community College*
Mike Coffman, *Commissioner, Town of Warrenton*
Bonnie Fitz, *Director, Warren County Parks & Recreation*
Jereann King Blue, *Resident*
Leanne Patrick, *President, Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce*
Robert Davie, *Administrator, Town of Warrenton*
Rose Ponton, *Community & Economic Developer, Warren County*

Warren County Economic Development Commission

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Angelena Kearney Dunlap
Charla Duncan, *Director of Community & Economic Development*

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Glen Locascio, *GIS Specialist*
Michael Dougherty, *Downtown development Specialist*

Plan Adoption

Warren County Board of Commissioners – January 8, 2024

Executive Summary

Through CORE, Warren County collaborated with N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division staff members and local stakeholders through a strategic planning process to identify and develop outdoor recreation assets that present economic growth opportunities. Strategy development focused on leveraging outdoor recreation assets to increase tourism, encourage small business development, enhance quality of life for residents, plan for outdoor recreation asset and infrastructure development, and position communities to grow and attract outdoor gear manufacturing industries. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

The plan proposes strategies, goals, objectives, and actions that communities can take to increase economic vitality by leveraging outdoor recreation. For the purposes of this strategic planning program outdoor recreation is defined as all recreational activities undertaken for leisure that occur outdoors, with an emphasis on those activities that involve some level of intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments. Furthermore, other community assets and economic institutions that benefit from or complement the outdoor recreation economy are addressed in the plan.

The plan provides a total of 29 recommended strategies under 5 priority areas, or goals. These goals, identified by the local work group, include:

Goal 1: Increase Outdoor Recreation & Related Small Business Revenue by 5% Annually

Goal 2: Expand & Improve Publicly Owned Outdoor Recreation Amenities by Two Sites

Goal 3: Develop the Outdoor Recreation Goods-Producing Ecosystem

Goal 4: Build a Resilient & Passionate Outdoor Recreation Workforce

Goal 5: Develop Sustainability & Conservation Practices to Protect Natural Resources and Community Aesthetic

These recommendations should serve as guideposts for Warren County as it considers future development efforts and should work in collaboration with other planning efforts undertaken by the county, municipalities, and related jurisdictions.

Background

There is a long tradition of outdoor recreation in North Carolina. From the mountains to the coast and everywhere in between there are incredible landscapes and unique places to pursue a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities. Participation in these activities generates a large economic impact. In recent years statistics show that participation in outdoor recreation is increasing, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. Continued growth in participation leads to the opportunity for the increased economic impact of outdoor recreation, particularly in rural locations where many of the state's outdoor recreation assets are located. Also, there is great potential to expose and engage people that have historically not participated in outdoor recreation activities at the same rate as others. It is important for all individuals to have the opportunity and access to enjoy recreational pursuits, and to have an opportunity to benefit economically from outdoor recreation. These factors, combined with other on-going outdoor recreation initiatives across the state, make it an ideal time to think critically about how this sector can continue to be leveraged to benefit local economies.

Economic Impact

Outdoor recreation activity and associated expenditures generate a large economic impact. This is a broad economic sector that comprises a diverse range of industries including manufacturing, retail, arts, entertainment, and recreation, as well as many supporting activities such as construction, travel and tourism, accommodation, and food service, and many more.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis' Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, nationwide, in 2022, the outdoor recreation economy represented \$563.7 billion in current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP), or 2.2 percent of the United States' total GDP. The outdoor recreation sector of the economy is growing at a faster rate than the overall economy. "Inflation-adjusted ("real") GDP for the outdoor recreation economy increased 4.8 percent in 2022, compared with a 1.9 percent increase for the overall U.S. economy, reflecting a deceleration from the increase in outdoor recreation of 22.7 percent in 2021. Real gross output for the outdoor recreation economy increased 7.5 percent, while outdoor recreation compensation increased 9.1 percent, and employment increased 7.4 percent (national table 9)." Employment in the outdoor recreation industry increased in all 50 states during 2022.

At the state level, outdoor recreation contributed \$14.5 billion in total value-added economic impact to North Carolina's GDP. North Carolina ranked as the 11th highest state in "Value-Added Outdoor Recreation in Total outdoor recreation activities" in 2022. This included employment for over 146,000 individuals that resulted in over \$6.8 billion in total compensation. Employment in key industries within the outdoor recreation sector includes

over 7,600 in manufacturing, 51,000 in retail, 27,000 in accommodation and food service, and over 29,000 in arts, entertainment, and recreation.¹

Outdoor Recreation Participation

According to the 2022 Outdoor Industry Association ‘Outdoor Participation Trends Report’, “outdoor participation continues to grow at record levels. More than half (54%) of Americans ages 6 and over participated in at least one outdoor activity in 2021, and the outdoor recreation participant base grew 2.2% in 2021 to 164.2M participants. This growing number of outdoor participants, however, did not fundamentally alter long-term declines in high frequency or ‘core’ outdoor participation.”²

Studies show that approximately 56% of North Carolinians participate in some form of outdoor recreation each year³. This includes more than 22.8 million visitors to North Carolina state parks in 2021 — three million more than any other year on record. Many parks, national forests, and other public recreation areas report increased visitation as well. These numbers represent a solid base of individuals participating in outdoor recreation and contributing to associated economic activity. But there is still room to engage more individuals and continue to increase participation in outdoor recreation, particularly among populations that have not historically participated in outdoor recreation at levels comparable to others. Also, people increasingly want outdoor recreation opportunities that are convenient to where they live so they can participate on a regular basis without the need to travel long distances.^{4 5}

Setting

Warren County is in north-central North Carolina on the border with Virginia. It is situated approximately sixty miles northeast of Raleigh and Durham and one hundred miles southwest of Richmond, Virginia. Interstate 85, a major north/south limited-access highway, has four interchanges in Warren County. Warren County is predominantly rural and includes three small, incorporated towns — Warrenton, Norlina, and Macon — and multiple unincorporated communities.

¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2022. <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>

² Outdoor Industry Association. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2022-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>

³ The Citizen-Times. North Carolina outdoor recreation is a \$28 billion industry, poised for further growth. October 11th, 2019. <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/2019/10/11/outdoor-economy-conference-asheville-highlights-28-billion-industry/3923846002/>

⁴ Headwaters Economics. Recreation Counties Attracting New Residents and Higher Incomes. <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/recreation-counties-attract/>

⁵ Outdoor Foundation. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. <https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022-Outdoor-Participation-Trends-Report.pdf>

Warren County has a total area of 444 square miles. This includes a total land area of 429 square miles and fifteen square miles of surface water (3.40%). Surface water coverage is dominated by Lake Gaston and Kerr Lake, which account for most of the surface water, and an extensive hydrologic system of creeks and streams, part of the Roanoke River Basin and Tar-Pamlico River Basin.

Topography is classified as having rolling hills, moderately steep slopes along water drainages, and an average elevation of 451 feet above sea level.

The rural character of Warren County defines much of its physical landscape. Historically its economy was driven by agriculture with strong tobacco and cotton production. Today, soybeans, hay, and winter wheat are the top crops, and tobacco still factors into the equation. Livestock also plays a role, with pigs, cattle, and poultry all contributing to the County's agricultural output.

While urban development is concentrated in a few areas, Warren County has begun to experience the pressure of growth. There is a recognition that significant population growth in Raleigh and Durham will eventually spread to the north. Warren County's towns have begun to experience investment both in commercial and residential rehabilitation projects. Additionally, lake-related development in northern Warren County continues to expand despite the lack of municipal infrastructure such as sewer and water service.⁶

Economic Impact – Visitor Spending Warren County

Warren County ranked third (\$63M) in the region for Visitor Spending⁷ in 2021. That's behind Nash (\$301M) and Halifax (\$119) counties and ahead of Vance (\$59M) and Franklin (\$35M).

The breakdown includes Lodging: \$15.75M (*includes 2nd home spending*); Food & Beverage: \$18.52M; Recreation: \$9.41M; Retail: \$5.64M; and Transport: \$13.70M (*includes ground and air transportation*). Airbnb shared a breakdown of total Host income in rural NC counties, and in Warren County the approximate income was \$2,292,000.

⁶ Warren County Comprehensive Development Plan 2022

⁷ VisitNC Data 2021

Demographics⁸ – Warren County

The population in this area is estimated to have changed from 18,642 to 18,317, resulting in a growth of -0.006% between 2020 and the current year. Over the next five years, the population is projected to grow by -0.004%. The median age is 47.5. Five years from now the median age is projected to be 48.6.

Of this area's current year estimated population, 49% are Black or African American, 38.3% are White, 5.4% are American Indian, 4.2% are Hispanic and 0.4% are Asian.

Currently, it's estimated that 40.6% of the population aged 25+ have a high school diploma or equivalent. 19.5% have some college, but no degree. 10.5% have an associate degree. 11.1% have earned a bachelor's degree and 5.9% have a graduate or professional degree.

Per capita income is \$32,277 and projected to increase to \$37,647 over the next five years. Median household income \$43,449 in the current year and projected to increase to \$49,954 over the next five years. Average household income is estimated to be \$75,421 in the current year and is projected to increase to \$86,939 over the next five years. Median disposable income for the current year is \$37,737 and Average disposable income is \$56,907.

Employment status for the civilian population age 16 and over is 92.2% with an unemployment rate of 7.8%.

Retail Snapshot⁹ shows a Total Retail Gap of \$98,356,252 within the 15-mile trade ring which includes most of Warren County. The gap includes full and limited-service restaurants, drinking places, pharmacies and drug stores, family clothing stores and additional categories. The complete Retail Analysis can be found in the Appendix.

Existing Plans Review

To complement and build upon subsequent community planning efforts, staff assembled and reviewed other relevant plans and documents. This review provides valuable insight and helps avoid duplication or contradictions of past planning proposals. The following documents were reviewed and considered during the CORE planning process.

⁸ Esri Community Profile - Forecasts for 2023 and 2028 US Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography

⁹ Claritas, LLC 2023 – 15-mile center from 206 Shaver Rd. Warrenton NC

Kerr-Tar Council of Governments Community Economic Development Strategy

Warren County is located within the Kerr Economic Development District (EDD). The Kerr-Tar Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) identified “Enhance Recreational Assets” as one of nine regional strategies. Recommendations include, creating a regional inventory of all recreational venues and activities; marketing identified opportunities to private developers who operate in the recreational sector; and identify funding sources to support public-led initiatives. The CEDS also identifies “Promoting Small Business/Entrepreneurial Development” as another strategy, which coincides with one of the goals of this plan.

Warren County 2021-2024 Strategic Plan

Warren County’s vision is of *“a diverse, thriving, rural community known for our creative, sustainable economic revitalization.”* The Strategic Plan’s strategies provide a basis for developing Outdoor Recreation as an economic driver: Enhancing Warren’s County’s distinctive economic development assets; Building out the entrepreneur ecosystem; Capitalizing on opportunities to enhance downtown revitalization, and heritage tourism; Advancing agriculture through tourism, farmers markets and events; and complete 50% of Recreation Master Plan by 2024.

Warren County Recreation Master Plan (2018)

The Parks & Recreation Department owns and maintains 179 acres of parkland throughout the County. The County recently acquired a 45-acre parcel adjacent to the Recreation Complex with the intention of developing it for recreational use. There are 3,235 acres of parkland in Warren County that is not owned by the County. Ownership of other park areas includes Town of Norlina, Town of Warrenton, and North Carolina State Parks. Kerr Lake and Lake Gaston are notable recreational features in Warren County. At Kerr Lake the reservoir is managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, and North Carolina State Parks manages campsites and boat access on the banks. Lake Gaston is maintained and owned by Dominion Energy, a private hydroelectric company that maintains the reservoir for energy generation and flood control. Warren County’s Buck Springs Park has a pier that provides fishing access to Lake Gaston, but there is no publicly maintained boat access to the lake in Warren County. There is recreational boat access to the lake through private marinas and private residences.

Recommendations in the 2018 Master Plan include Parkland Goal #3 “Plan for development of future parkland, trails and facilities,” and Programming Goal #3 is to “Expand programming to encourage recreational tourism in Warren County.”

Warren County Comprehensive Plan 2022

Six of the eight goals identified in Warren County's Comprehensive Plan relate to Outdoor Recreation. The goals call for building capacity for new economic opportunities including investment in infrastructure; Stimulating development of new housing with focus on affordable and workforce housing options; Providing equitable opportunities to enjoy an active lifestyle; Promoting the arts, cultural activities, and heritage tourism; and, Prioritizing a safe and interconnected transportation system, including greenways and bicycle facilities. Specific recommendations are found in sections devoted to Economic Development & Agriculture; Cultural & Natural Resources; Parks, Recreation & Tourism; and Land Use & Housing.

Planning Process

Under the REDD, MS&RP Center staff facilitates the CORE strategic planning process with participation from the local government and an established local work group. This work group is comprised of individuals who have a vested interest in leveraging outdoor recreation to enhance economic development. The planning process employs established planning methods including presenting economic and associated data, asset mapping, economic driver identification, SWOT analysis, stakeholder interviews, business questionnaires, local work group discussions, and more. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

Situational Analysis

REDD Staff met with Charla Duncan, Director of Community & Economic Development for Warren County following receipt of an initial application for participation in the *Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)* on November 17, 2022. A Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) and Resolution for the Warren County CORE Strategic Plan was developed by REDD staff and adopted by the Warren County Board of Commissioners at their meeting on February 6, 2023. REDD staff was given a guided tour of Warren County with driving tours of Macon, Norlina, and a self-guided walking tour of Warrenton.

Local Work Group Establishment and Involvement

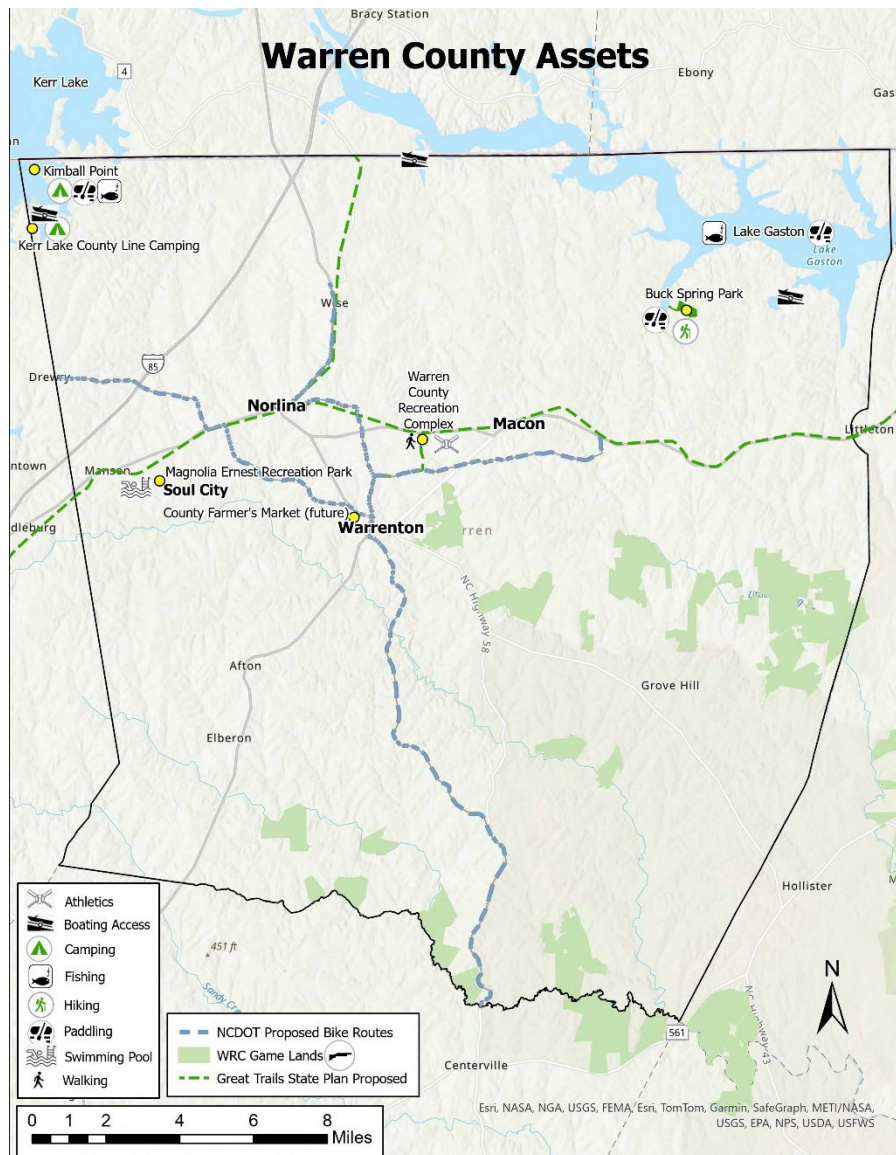
County staff asked community members to participate in the local work group. Beginning in March 2023, the Rural Planning team met with a local work group for a series of four sessions to gather and share information and share ideas. The local work group was comprised of business owners, residents, staff from Vance-Granville Community College, Warren County Parks & Recreation, Warren County Economic Development, a town administrator, and town commissioner. During these sessions the work group reviewed data collected by REDD staff,

completed a Work Group survey, SWOT analysis, economic positioning statement and established goals and strategies for the Implementation Plan.

The local work group will be encouraged to remain as a unit to assist the County and municipalities implement the strategic plan. The County is encouraged to adopt the work group as a standing or ad hoc committee of the Economic Development Commission.

Asset Mapping

The Warren County Outdoor Recreation Asset map highlights publicly controlled properties in Warren County at the Federal, State, and local levels, as well as major trails and waterways.

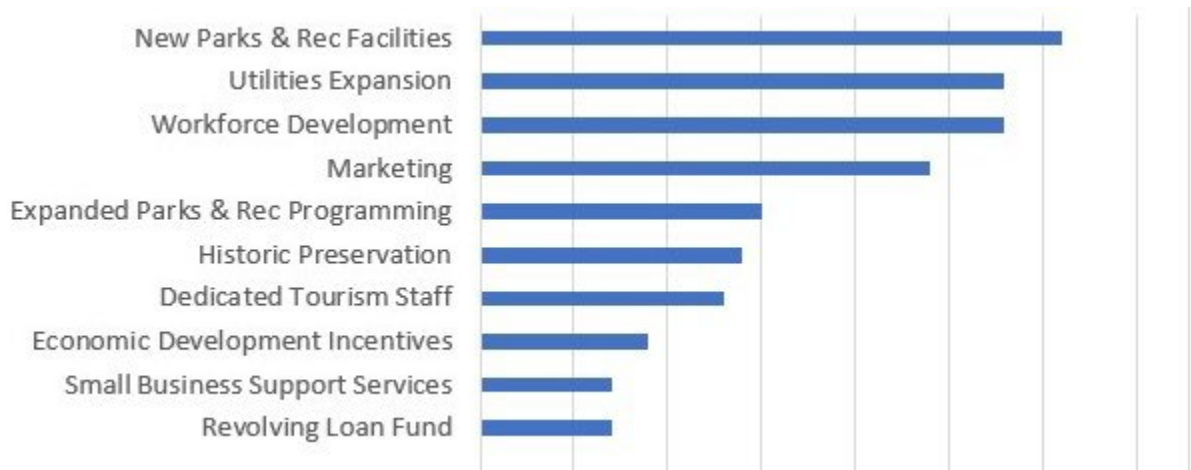


Public Engagement

We used an online survey to receive input from our CORE Work Group, described above, as well as four 2-hour meetings to develop the economic positioning statement and develop strategies. Additionally, a Stakeholder Breakfast event was held on September 26, 2023, at Buck Springs Plantation to receive feedback on recommended Strategies, Objectives and Actions. There were sixteen people in attendance. An online Stakeholder questionnaire was developed for all invitees with fifteen respondents. The results from the questionnaire will be helpful to EDC staff as they continue to work to strengthen existing businesses and to implement the recommendations. The results from the online stakeholder survey and notes from the Stakeholder Breakfast are included in the Appendix.

Two takeaways from the questionnaire and event include:

- 73% responded to the online questionnaire that local government should invest more local funding into building and supporting the outdoor recreation industry.
- “Vote with Your Dollars” at the Stakeholder Breakfast results



Economic Positioning Statement

A community economic positioning/vision statement provides a forward-looking strategic framework to help guide local government and the community make disciplined, tactical, and incremental decisions on community issues as they arise. The local work group was led through an exercise to develop an Outdoor Recreation Economic Positioning Statement for Warren County.

The CORE work group met several times to develop the proposed economic positioning statement, first by creating individual statements, identifying key words, phrases, and developing a draft statement. A final statement was crafted by the group during its last working meeting. This is the adopted statement:

With nationally recognized year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, Warren County's scenic farmland, clear waters, and open skies have set the scene for generations of memory-making experiences for residents and visitors. Vibrant and welcoming, Warren County is a place for people of all backgrounds to stretch their legs and celebrate their connection to the landscape in a thriving, rural community.

Plan Review and Adoption

The CORE Strategic Plan was reviewed by members of the CORE Work Group on October 10, 2023, and presented to the Warren County Economic Development Commission Board on November 20, 2023. The EDC recommended to the Board of Commissioners that the plan be considered for adoption. The Warren County Board of Commissioners received the report and presentation by REDD staff during their regular meeting on December 13, 2023. The plan was adopted by the Board of Commissioners during their regular meeting on January 9, 2024.

Warren County CORE Implementation Plan

SUMMARY

Outdoor Recreation Economic Positioning Vision

With nationally recognized year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, Warren County's scenic farmland, clear waters, and open skies have set the scene for generations of memory-making experiences for residents and visitors. Vibrant and welcoming, Warren County is a place for people of all backgrounds to stretch their legs and celebrate their connection to the landscape in a thriving, rural community.

Goal 1: Increase outdoor recreation and related small business revenue by 5%

Goal 2: Expand publicly owned outdoor recreation amenities by two sites

Goal 3: Develop the county's outdoor goods-producing industry

Goal 4: Build a resilient and passionate outdoor recreation workforce

Goal 5: Develop sustainability and conservation practices to protect natural resources and community aesthetic

Goal 1: Increase outdoor recreation and related small business revenue by 5% annually

Strategy 1.1: Extend the traditional outdoor recreation season beyond May-September

Strategy 1.2: Improve resident engagement and participation in outdoor activities

Strategy 1.3: Improve economic impacts of existing festivals, cultural & historical events, and tours by 5% annually; and incorporate elements of outdoor recreation as appropriate

Strategy 1.4: Expand the county's marketing plan to include outdoor recreation brand identity

Strategy 1.5: Establish a Tourism Development Authority (TDA)

Strategy 1.6: Increase travel-related expenditures revenue by 10% annually

Strategy 1.7: Increase availability of and revenue from short-term rentals by 3% annually

Strategy 1.9: Facilitate outdoor recreation activities in partnership among local businesses, the Warren County School system, and early childhood businesses

Goal 2: Expand & improve publicly owned outdoor recreation amenities by two sites

Strategy 2.1: Expand mountain biking and walking trails by 20+ miles

Strategy 2.2: Advocate for the expansion of allowable outdoor recreation activities within state game lands

Strategy 2.3: Develop amenities at the county-owned Buck Spring public access point on Lake Gaston

Strategy 2.4: Market public access at Kimball Point on Kerr Lake

Strategy 2.5: Secure funding for 25% of phase 1 of the greenways and trails initiative

Strategy 2.6: Continue to grow and diversify Warren County Parks & Recreation outdoor recreation programming and facilities

Strategy 2.7: Develop the county-owned community facility and farmers market at 429 W Ridgeway St in Warrenton

Goal 3: Develop the outdoor recreation goods-producing ecosystem

Strategy 3.1: Increase outdoor recreation business development opportunities by 2 activities per year in partnership with VGCC Small Business Center and other business development agencies

Strategy 3.2: Implement a Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program for Warren County with a measurable focus on outdoor recreation-related businesses

Strategy 3.3: Conduct an industry cluster inventory and analysis, as well as a supply chain map for the outdoor recreation industry

Strategy 3.4: Support the expansion and attraction of outdoor recreation manufacturing companies

Strategy 3.5: Target outdoor recreation goods-producing industries in the local economic development incentive policy

Strategy 3.6: Explore alternative financing options and small business services and educational programming

Goal 4: Build a resilient and passionate outdoor recreation workforce

Strategy 4.1: Partner with VGCC to support the expansion of industry-specific workforce development training programs (hard and soft skills)

Strategy 4.2: Market VGCC customized training and apprenticeship programs

Strategy 4.3: Work with local businesses to advocate for and support increased goods-producing average weekly wages by \$300

Strategy 4.4: Work with local businesses to advocate for and support increased service-producing average weekly wages by \$200

Strategy 4.5: Facilitate educational opportunities for K-12 students and workforce pipeline about outdoor recreation career and employment options in Warren County

Goal 5: Develop sustainability and conservation practices to protect natural resources and community aesthetic

Strategy 5.1: Promote land management practices that advance the dual purpose of environmental sustainability and recreational opportunities; with an aim to sustain peoples' connection with nature, and enhance human health outcomes

Strategy 5.2: Examine land use policies and promote conservation-oriented development and sustainable best practices in recreational facility design and construction

Strategy 5.3: Work to identify challenges posed by severe weather to outdoor recreation destinations and the related business ecosystem, and formulate rapid-response business and facilities assistance framework

Plan Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Warren County will be responsible for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting accomplishments on the objectives of this plan to the Rural Economic Development Division.

Plan Implementation

Maintaining a dedicated group to follow through after the planning process to begin addressing goals and objectives outlined in this plan is critical to attaining the potential economic impact of these strategies. This could be the same work group that helped develop this plan, or another similar group that is representative of the community and can advance the goals of this plan.

The sustained presence of such a group builds ‘social capital’ within the group that improves their ability to work together and effectively address common goals. Furthermore, a dedicated group ensures continuity from planning stage through implementation, provides accountability to ensure that objectives are being met, and allows the community to react and respond quickly when an opportunity is presented. But this group should not be the sole entity responsible for implementing all the goals of the plan.

Instead, the group should function as a convener and point of contact to connect to other individuals, organizations, and resources to help the broader community achieve these goals. Maintaining a regular meeting schedule will also help increase the effectiveness of the group, and the entirety of the plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We recommend that six (6) months after the implementation Plan is adopted the County Board receive a progress update from the County Manager.

If the County would like the NC Commerce Rural Planning Center to aid or provide guidance in the implementation of any of the recommendations, the County Manager should direct that request in writing (e-mail) to the Community Economic Development Planner for the North Central Prosperity Zone or to the Main Street & Rural Planning Center.

After a specified period, 6 months to 1 year, the Planner and county will determine if the county might benefit from other asset-based, local economic development technical assistance. On the 1-year anniversary of adoption of the Assessment and Recommendations, the Planner will conduct a review of the County’s progress and results.

If the Goals need revisions or adjustments the Plan should be amended by the County. These amendments should also be adopted by the County Commissioners.

We suggest that the easiest recommendations be addressed first and accomplished. The more difficult items will take some persistence, time, and working together by the person(s) or groups responsible identified in for each of the items.

Appendix

See separate document