

# ***Currituck Travel & Tourism***



## ***Strategy & Marketing Plan***

***2020-2021***

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	Page 2
Our Mission & Vision Statements.....	Page 3
Department Overview.....	Page 4
Marketing Analysis.....	Page 6
Marketing Strategy for 2020-2021 .....	Page 14
Marketing Tactics for 2020-2021 .....	Page 19
Events .....	Page 30
Competition.....	Page 31
Research.....	Page 33
Reporting.....	Page 36
Organization Affiliations.....	Page 38
Business Resources.....	Page 39
Board of Commissioners & Tourism Advisory Board.....	Page 40

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism was established in 2005 by Currituck County to promote Currituck to potential visiting tourists. The main office of the department is located at the Currituck Welcome Center in Moyock, NC with an additional Corolla Visitor Center located in Corolla, NC. Visiting tourists, experiencing the beauty of the Currituck Outer Banks and Mainland, spend money on lodging, entertainment, food and other goods and services which equate to sales tax relief to Currituck residents. An estimated 500,000 tourists visit Currituck during our 10 week high season each year, and visitor spending during this season and other times of the year contributed \$13,970,000 in local county tax revenues in 2018 and *resulted in tax relief for every resident in Currituck County of \$903.47*. Economic impact for 2019 will be available in late August of 2020.

Currituck County tourism is strong and continues to grow, producing over \$243 million in direct consumer spending in 2018 (↑ 5.61% from 2017). Revenues are ↑ 76.8% from the \$138 million collected five years ago in 2013.

Other notable impacts of the Currituck County tourism industry in the latest data from 2018 include:



Occupancy tax revenues are the primary measure for Currituck tourism and the source for sustainable funding. Occupancy revenues for fiscal year 2018-2019 (ending 6/30/2019) totaled \$12,695,780.

Currituck Travel & Tourism has identified three pillars/goals to guide its strategic and marketing plan to fit its mission:



## OUR MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS

***The Mission of the Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism is promotion of the County's beaches and Mainland to attract guests for the purpose of visitation spending.***

Visitation generated by Currituck Travel & Tourism promotion strengthens the local economy by local and state sales taxes collected through visitor spending. The economic impact of these taxes enhances the quality of life for Currituck County residents and encourages tourism-related business growth.

***We encourage visitor spending by:***

- Providing visitors with information on County tourism-related businesses, attractions, activities, events, accommodations, services and historical sites located in Currituck County by digital advertising, print promotion and welcome centers.
- Assisting County tourism-related businesses with advertising & marketing promotion; and
- Creating and producing events to draw visitors to Currituck.

***The Vision of Currituck Travel & tourism is to encourage and inspire visitation to our beaches and Mainland for the pursuit of adventure, the love of history, the warmth of Southern hospitality and the making of family traditions.***

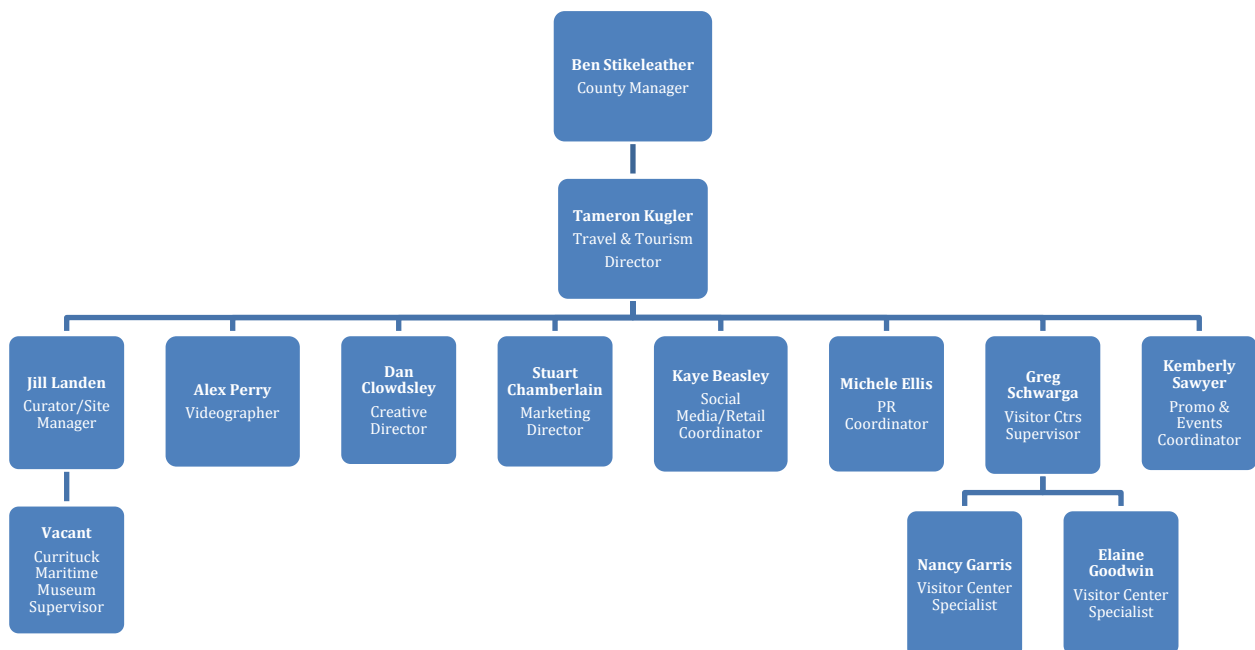
## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The North Carolina General Assembly has set rules into place that allow NC Counties to collect an Occupancy Tax to fund their tourism marketing efforts. This can be up to a 6% tax added to rental accommodations that include hotel rooms and vacation rental homes. Occupancy tax is currently collected by Currituck County at 6%, and the Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism is 100% funded by one-third of the yearly occupancy tax collections by the County. These funds are used for the operations of the department and for the promotion of Currituck County to encourage visitation. The remaining two-thirds of the tax are used to fund tourism-related activities and are administered by the Tourism Development Authority.

*It is important to note that occupancy tax can only be used for tourism promotion or tourism-related activities and cannot be added to the County's general fund.*

### TRAVEL & TOURISM TEAM

The Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism is comprised of 12 full-time employees and temporary part-time employees whose number varies seasonally. Full-time employees and positions:



The Director reports to the County Manager who, in turn, reports to the Board of Commissioners that also functions as the Tourism Development Authority (TDA). Each member of the TDA appoints an individual in the tourism industry to the Tourism Advisory Board to serve in an advisory capacity to the Department. The County Manager, the Tourism Director and a member of the TDA serve in an ex officio capacity.

## DEPARTMENTAL TEAMS

Two teams have been created for communications and planning purposes and to ensure cohesive operations. These two teams meet twice monthly (the first and third Mondays of the month) and report to the Director during the twice monthly full staff meetings (the second and fourth Mondays of the month). These teams are:

### Communications

- **Stuart Chamberlain - Marketing Director and Lead**
- Dan Clowdsley - Creative Director
- Kaye Beasley - Social Media/Retail Sales
- Michele Ellis - Public Relations Coordinator
- Alex Perry - Videographer

### Guest Services

- **Greg Schwarga - Visitor Centers Supervisor and Lead**
- Jill Landen - Site Manager & Curator
- Kemberly Sawyer - Promotions & Events Coordinator
- Nancy Garriss - Visitor Center Specialist
- Elaine Goodwin - Visitor Center Specialist
- Currituck Maritime Museum Supervisor

## DEPARTMENTAL SITE OPERATIONS

Currituck Travel & Tourism, in addition to promotional activity, is responsible for the promotion, operation and staffing of the following four sites:

- Historic Corolla Park;
- The Whalehead Historic House Museum;
- The Currituck Maritime Museum; and
- The Historic Jarvisburg Colored School.

We also assist in the marketing and promotion of the Currituck County Rural Center (CCRC) and the tournament fields at Currituck Community Park. Information for tourists and event and tournament planners for sports, equestrian and other outdoor activities available at Currituck County parks can be accessed here: [www.visitcurrituck.com/currituck-outdoor-activity-venues/](http://www.visitcurrituck.com/currituck-outdoor-activity-venues/). These venues are folded into the marketing plan for the department. The Currituck Bulls & BBQ event is specifically staged at the CCRC to draw attention to this multi-use equestrian park, and the many amenities it provides, to promote Mainland tourism.



## MARKETING ANALYSIS

### SWOT ANALYSIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats)

*In 2018, Currituck Travel & Tourism contracted with Chandlerthinks, a research firm located in Franklin, TN, to conduct a comprehensive destination research study (the last study was performed in 2011 by Randall Travel). The following analysis is based on this updated information.*

*Several methods of research were used to gather information during this project from three Destination Marketing Groups (DMG):*

- *Internal Staff*
- *Visitors*
- *Industry Stakeholders*
- *Industry Data*

*Visitor Intercepts, Focus Groups and Electronic Surveys, Industry Travel Trends and other data were used to compile this report.*

The SWOT analysis illustrates all the things that could affect Currituck County tourism.

#### 1. ***Strengths highlight the things that are positive within Currituck County's control:***

- VisitCurrituck.com is used a lot in visitor trip planning.
- Social media photography is very well received. It creates engagement.
- Staff rocks! Talented and great attitude.
- Beach business is busy. In-season it's full.
- Corolla beach is Currituck County's main attraction.
- Currituck County tourism benefits from an existing strong Outer Banks brand.
- Visitors spend the majority of their trip at the beach and do not perceive the beaches as crowded.
- Beautiful, clean beaches and a relaxed, uncrowded atmosphere help differentiate Currituck Outer Banks.
- Corolla is also where most tourism assets are concentrated, such as: the Wild Horses, the Whalehead, Corolla Lighthouse, Historic Corolla Park, the Wildlife Resource Center, several events, outdoor sports, shopping, restaurants, lodging options, etc.
- Currituck Outer Banks is seen as less commercial than the rest of the Outer Banks. This also ensures a higher-end clientele.
- The destination receives very high visitor ratings.
- Currituck Outer Banks has a very strong peak season, strong repeat visitation, week-long trips and visitors arriving in large groups averaging 5-8 people.
- The Mainland offers several attractions, such as: H2OBX Waterpark, Farmers Markets, Grave Digger, the Currituck Country Rural Center (CCRC), golf courses, the Cotton Gin shopping, Weeping Radish Brewery, etc.

- Knotts Island and the Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge are a beautiful natural asset, offering access to the Currituck Sound and great birding (it is part of the Atlantic Flyway).
- Travel Guides create conversion and your website matters. More inquiries result in more visitors.

## **2. *Weaknesses highlight the things that are negative within Currituck County's control:***

- Several infrastructure needs present challenges:
  - Traffic - one lane traffic; only one bridge
  - Difficult access
  - Roadway safety: serious accidents along Hwy 12
  - Bike lanes are not continuous
  - Limited available land/lots left in Corolla for development
- Aside from the beach, tourism assets and activities are limited.
- Name recognition is lost within the greater Outer Banks brand. Visitors know they're in the Outer Banks or in Corolla, not that they are in Currituck County.
- Staffing is a big challenge due to seasonality and a lack of employee/staff housing (too expensive).
- Lodging is primarily limited to vacation homes.
- There are only two hotels in Corolla and two small hotels on the Mainland. This results in limited opportunities for short getaways.
- Changing travel preferences show a preference for shorter stays & alternating locations
- Mainland attractions remain less popular:
  - Difficult access prevents tourists from visiting the Mainland once they are at the beach
  - Limited activities/attractions for rainy days
  - No business during off season – November through March

## **3. *Opportunities highlight the external things that are positive outside of Currituck County's control but something that could be exploited in favor of Currituck County's mission:***

- Mainland development could be the future of Currituck County tourism.
- Bridge development is a game changer:
  - the new bridge will open up traffic and improve access;
  - residents could go to Corolla for events; and
  - tourists could go to Mainland for attractions.
- Knotts Island and Mackay's Island Wildlife Refuge
- Golf (most golfing options in Outer Banks)



- Extend the season: peak or shoulder (this is a marketing solution)
- Better promotion of the shoulder seasons:
  - Visitors spend more money.
  - Beach is less crowded.
  - There is a potential for niche marketing with:
    - girl getaways;
    - college reunions; and
    - smaller/younger families.
- Tourism opportunities exist outside of the beaches - “Think outside the beach”
- Better utilization of the Currituck Sound:
  - Interest in eco-tourism
  - land swap project between County and US Wildlife.
- Developing tourism assets on the lower Mainland - hotel and retail

**4. *Threats highlight the external things that are negative outside of Currituck County’s control that may require addressing in order to avoid a negative impact towards Currituck County’s mission:***

- The Beach versus Mainland is a real divide among locals.
- Outer Banks is arguably the strongest brand name but “owned” by Dare County.
- Twenty weeks is the revenue generating time frame and revenues for everyone are vulnerable if it gets threatened (hurricane). Losing one week is a big blow.
- The dead season is November through April.
- Traffic to the beach can be a big problem and an inconvenience for residents and tourists.
- Currituck lacks rainy day activities.
- Alternate/individual school schedules:
  - School schedules are currently regulated by state law to protect the tourism season.
  - Legislation is being sought that would allow counties to set individual school schedules which has the potential to change the tourism season and, thus, highly impact tourism revenue.

## THE VISITOR PROFILE

*A customer profile study was conducted by geocoding approximately 9,000 addresses from the Currituck County tourism inquiry database.*

### Visitor Overview

- Guests plan their trip in advance – 32% plan 6-12 months in advance and 9% more than 12 months in advance.
- Average guest per person spending is \$463.07.
- Average party size is 7.11 guests.
- Nights per visit - 88% of guests stay five or more nights during their visit.
- Average group size is 4.9 people and is comprised of multi-generational families and multi- families. One-third traveled with children of different age groups.
- Visitors spend most of their budget on lodging and only about one-tenth of their budget on entertainment, shopping or dining.
- Visitors primarily dine (88%), shop (86%) and visit the Lighthouse (73%) while visiting.
- Home rentals dominate lodging type (over 70%).
- Strong repeat visitor vacation destination (82%):
  - 20% have visited 20+ times; and
  - over 60% have visited more than 5 times.
- Top Currituck County visitor activities are:
  - the beach (4-5 days are spent on the beach);
  - the Currituck Beach Lighthouse; Whalehead activities;
  - taking Wild Horse tours;
  - driving on the beach; and
  - local dining.

## Visitor Originations

Top 20 Visitor States	Top 20 Visitor Cities
North Carolina	Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News
Virginia	Washington, DC – Alexandria, VA
Pennsylvania	Pittsburgh
Ohio	Richmond
New York	Philadelphia
Maryland	New York
New Jersey	Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC
West Virginia	Raleigh, NC
South Carolina	Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD
Georgia	Winston-Salem, NC
Tennessee	Greensboro-High Point, NC
Kentucky	Cleveland-Elyria, OH
Florida	Columbus, OH
Massachusetts	Roanoke, VA
Michigan	Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC
Indiana	Lynchburg, VA
Connecticut	Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA
Illinois	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA
Delaware	Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN
Texas	Harrisburg-Carlisle, PA

Utilizes market segmentation  
based on ESRI's Tapestry  
Segmentation

## Visitor LifeMode Groups

***The majority of Currituck County visitor inquiries fall within five LifeMode groups and account for almost three-fourths (74%) of all Currituck County visitor inquiry households. These include:***

- Cozy Country Living (rural empty nesters)
- GenXurban (older GenXers with fewer kids)
- Rustic Outposts (older families)
- Affluent Estates (wealthy married couples)
- Family Landscapes (young families)

<b>LifeMode Group</b>	<b>Visitor Inquiry Households</b>		<b>2017 U.S. Population</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Cozy Country Living</b>	1,934	20.7%	14,778,881	12.0%
<b>GenXurban</b>	1,602	17.2%	14,023,549	11.4%
<b>Rustic Outposts</b>	1,414	15.2%	10,150,888	8.2%
<b>Affluent Estates</b>	1,049	11.2	12,162,168	9.9%
<b>Family Landscapes</b>	925	9.9	9,166,919	7.4%

*Visitor inquiries are 84% more likely than the U.S. average to come from Rustic Outposts and 73% more likely than average to come from Cozy Country Living. Below, is a summary description of Currituck's two main LifeMode groups:*

- **Rustic Outposts**

- Country life with older families in older homes.
- Rustic Outposts depend on manufacturing, retail and healthcare, with pockets of mining and agricultural jobs.
- Low labor force participation in skilled and service occupations.
- Own affordable, older single-family or mobile homes; vehicle ownership, a must.
- Residents live within their means, shop at discount stores and maintain their own vehicles (purchased used) and homes.
- Outdoor enthusiasts, who grow their own vegetables, love their pets and enjoy hunting and fishing.
- Technology is cost prohibitive and complicated.
- Pay bills in person, use the yellow pages, read the newspaper and mail-order books.

- **Cozy Country Living**

- Empty nesters in bucolic settings.
- Largest Tapestry group, almost half of households located in the Midwest.
- Homeowners with pets, residing in single-family dwellings in rural areas.
- Politically conservative and believe in the importance of buying American.
- Own domestic trucks, motorcycles, and ATVs/UTVs.
- Prefer to eat at home, shop at discount retail stores (especially Wal-Mart), bank in person, and spend little time online.
- Own every tool and piece of equipment imaginable to maintain their homes, vehicles, vegetable gardens, and lawns.
- Listen to country music.
- Watch auto racing on TV.
- Play the lottery.
- Enjoy outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, camping, boating, and even bird watching.

Utilizes market segmentation based on ESRI's Tapestry Segmentation - segments within an Urbanization Summary Group share geographic and physical features such as population density, size of city, and location relative to a metropolitan area.

## Visitor Urbanization Groups

The top three Urbanization Groups of Currituck County are listed below and, when combined, account for 85.5% of all Currituck County visitor inquiry households:

- Rural Urbanization – 84%
- Semirural – 31%
- Suburban Periphery – 16%

Utilizing market segmentation based on ESRI's Tapestry Segmentation - the individual 67 Tapestry segments provide more differentiating power than the above summary groups and provides a short description of the type of people that make up a segment.

## Top Tapestry Segments

Below are Currituck County's top ten segments. Combined, they make up half of all Currituck County visitor inquiries (50.3%).

Rank	Tapestry Segment	Visitor Inquiry Households		2017 U.S. Population	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	Southern Satellites	653	7.0%	3,856,837	3.1%
2	Salt of the Earth	623	6.7%	3,545,803	2.9%
3	Green Acres	577	6.2%	3,923,386	3.2%
4	Savvy Suburbanites	474	5.1%	3,664,237	3.0%
5	Comfortable Empty Nesters	454	4.9%	3,024,243	2.5%
Subtotal			29.9%		14.7%
6	Soccer Moms	405	4.35%	3,541,287	2.9%
7	Midlife Constants	389	4.2%	3,068,352	2.5%
8	Heartland Communities	379	4.1%	2,850,606	2.3%
9	Rooted Rural	372	4.0%	2,430,868	2.0%
10	Middleburg	359	3.85%	3,511,159	2.9%
Subtotal			20.5%		12.6%
Total			50.4%		27.3%

When looking at the top five segments in sum (30% of all inquiries), they reveal that people interested in visiting Currituck County are:

- *primarily white;*
- *college educated;*
- *have children, but some are already empty nesters;*
- *outdoor lovers;*
- *DYI;*
- *use technology as a tool, not a trend, and hence many are not up-do-date with the latest tech.*
- *in their mid-40's;*
- *married and own their homes;*
- *enjoy country lifestyles;*
- *avid gardeners;*
- *cost-conscious; and*

### Other Tapestry Findings

- They are more likely to be interested in supporting the arts and NPR.
- They prefer domestic brand vehicles, such as Buick, Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler and Chevrolet.
- They spend large on their credit cards each month and they own vacation or weekend homes.
- American Express is their credit card of choice.
- They are smart with their money.
- They have well-equipped households.
- They own items such as hot tubs, fireplaces, separate freezers, washers and dryers, indoor and outdoor grills and many additional household items.
- They are more likely to shop at Piggly Wiggly, IGA and Save-A-Lot grocery stores.
- When it comes to their home, garden and lawn, visitors interested in Currituck County seem to show a DIY attitude. They like to tend to their lawns with tractors, mowers, garden tillers and leaf blowers.
- They are more likely to listen to news radio and satellite radio (SiriusXM).
- They are more likely to own satellite dishes.
- Their favorite programs are the Outdoor Channel and CMT.
- They are pet lovers and own multiple dogs and cats.
- They regularly go to fine dining restaurants but they are also more likely than average to eat at Hardee's or Captain D's.
- They are almost twice as likely as the average American to shop at Tractor Supply Company and 48% more likely to shop at Nordstrom.
- They travel frequently – both domestically and internationally, and not just for business.
- They spend \$3,000 or more on their vacations
- Their preferred airline is United/Continental.
- They are involved in civil and political happenings, whether voicing their opinions in letters to news editors or attending rallies, speeches and protests.



### MARKETING & ADVERTISING

With the advent of Covid-19 during February and March of 2020, we have taken a hard look at how we market our destination and what that marketing looks like. One of the adjustments that we made while visitors were not allowed to enter Corolla in Currituck County, was to create a webpage for our visitors or potential visitors where they could view virtual tours and videos, download coloring books and recipes, and interact with us on a variety of levels. We had great success with many new unique views to our site. We took a look at our digital and television advertising and adjusted accordingly, either suspending it all together or creating new media with the message that we miss you and hope you can come back soon when the time is right. During our current recovery stage, our media has a different flavor, one of space and safety. We created videos featuring business owners who spoke to the meaning of tourism to them, to their families and to the County. We sent out a travel sentiment survey managed and administered by the company, Chandlerthinks, to gauge the feelings of travelers who have consistently come to Corolla for several years or who have always shown marked interest in our destination. The goal of our strategic planning, that encompassed the above tactics and more, was to keep our destination front and center to those travelers contemplating a vacation or planning a vacation for the future. We stressed the wide open spaces, the “drive to” destination emphasizing safety within your own vehicle while traveling, and the comfort and safety of a vacation rental which is accessed only by you, your family and any invited guests.

Consequently, when our doors opened back up to visitors in May 2020, we saw unprecedented demand for vacation rental accommodations in Corolla. We are enjoying an occupancy rate that we have not seen for many years. No one predicted this, no one expected this, but we are all grateful for these intrepid vacationers.

Covid-19 is still with us, so we are adjusting our marketing strategy and looking for new and unique marketing programs and tactics. However, our core mission has not changed and we will continue to pursue traditional marketing avenues even as we explore and put into play innovative new opportunities.

Marketing objectives for the coming year align with our mission:

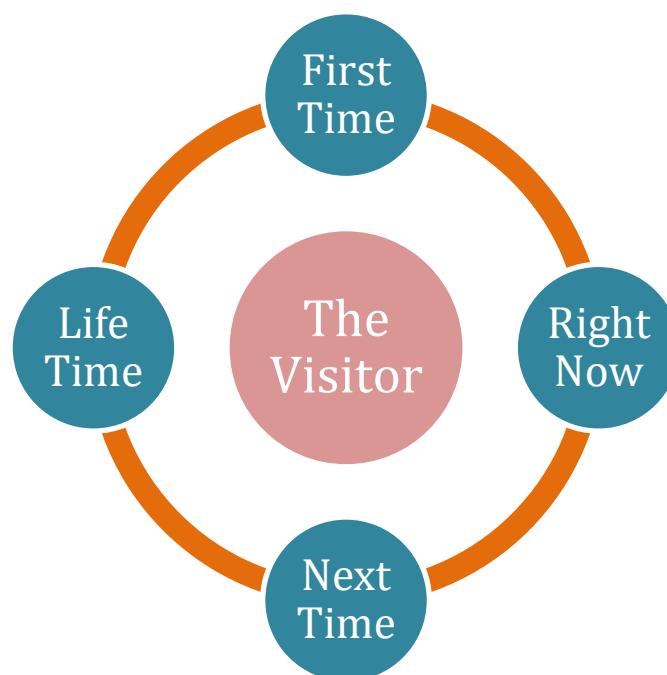
- Increase Occupancy Tax and sales tax revenues by attracting visitation
- Generate more downstream clicks to partners
- Expand Facebook reach to over 1 million and over 350,000 likes
- Expand our Twitter following
- Continue to brand Currituck as a family friendly destination

Advertising will be directed to our Core Feeder Markets as reflected in our visitor profile and by using data obtained from the KeyData dashboard. These include North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Maryland and New Jersey. However, we have several Opportunity Feeder Markets that we will concentrate on in 2020-2021 that include West Virginia,

Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, Illinois and Tennessee. We will continue to pull more regionally for event marketing and day trippers, primarily in the Richmond to the Hampton Roads Virginia areas.

## CONSUMER AUDIENCE

Currituck Travel & Tourism has identified four consumer audiences, and the unique characteristics that comprise our visitor profile will drive our marketing efforts and will be reflected in media placement and in visual display. These are:



As we look at generational travel, which will be referenced in this document, it includes the following groupings:

- Gen Z, iGen, or Centennials: Born 1996 – TBD
- Millennials or Gen Y: Born 1977 – 1995
- Generation X: Born 1965 – 1976
- Baby Boomers: Born 1946 – 1964
- Traditionalists or Silent Generation: Born 1945 and before

Baby Boomers are still the group primarily paying for the vacation accommodations in our destination when traveling in family groups.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

**Primary:** The demographics of the visitors we seek include:

- Household Income (HHI) of \$120,000 or higher: Household income is the combined gross income of all people occupying the same housing unit, who are 15 years and older. In 2019, the average household income was \$36,688.
- We market to women (who statistically make most of the vacation destination decisions) between the ages of 34-64, in family groups that want to reconnect with each other, connect with nature and a relaxing environment and intend to travel in the next three to twelve months. These family groups include:
  - Families with school-aged children
  - Empty Nesters
  - Families with non-school aged children
  - Families with home-schooled children
- Targeted niche subcategories within this demographic include:
  - Nature Lovers
  - Adventure Seekers
  - Holiday and Reunion Family Groups
  - Golfers
  - Hunters/Sportsmen

**Secondary:** The demographics of our secondary audiences do not have a target HHI requirement and are generally comprised of a younger audience such as Millennials:

- Engaged Couples – those interested in a destination wedding;
- Eco-Tourism
- Foodies (including beer and wine enthusiasts)
- Experiential Travelers.

## FROM “INTEREST” TO “VISIT”

Following are strategies to reach our audiences and convert an “interest” to a “visit”:

- The use of new video assets to deliver iconic coastal imagery and create a personal connection by using locals to tell stories about the area.
- Integrating video throughout the website, in rich media ads, content teasers and social media.
- Creating 15 and 30 second video spots that are seasonally based and focus on five key interest categories (Nature Lovers, Weddings, Foodies, Adventure Seekers & Family Groups).

- Creating a consistent, year-round presence (majority in the September to February timeframe) with paid advertising and increasing digital presence during peak holiday times.
- Running strategic ad campaigns during Thanksgiving, Christmas and other major holidays to take advantage of families spending time together and potentially planning their next reunion or vacation.
- Changing creative based on the season to reflect current area conditions and travel habits:
  - Use video whenever possible.
  - Continue to curate and create new photography assets for use in both print and digital advertising.
- Relying more heavily on email marketing:
  - Utilize our database of 70,000 double opt in subscribers.
  - Send out two emails per month,
    - one email focusing on events; and
    - one email focusing on seasonal activities.
- Content Development
  - The Corolla App that allows local businesses to post special deals, gives information about beach accesses and shows key points of interest in a more concise and efficient manner.
  - Embrace the idea of storytelling through our content.
  - Inspire future visitors with stories that will create an emotional response.
  - Continue to add to our visual library by scheduling quarterly or bi-annual photo shoots to consistently keep our image fresh.
  - Change homepage content to reflect current season and feature activities that are available during that particular time of year.
  - Showcase local recipes, artists and business owners in their “element” through a series of videos and photographs that will engage visitors with our destination on a deeper level
  - More original written content creation that can be used in a variety of ways (i.e. Native Content Campaigns, Eblast content, etc.)
- User Generated Content
 

Consumers are shopping smarter and relying heavily on product recommendations and reviews from family or friends. Cookie cutter content is no longer persuasive enough to convince visitors to make travel decisions. Thus, integrating user generated photos, reviews and testimonials will create a more authentic connection between the Currituck Outer Banks and potential visitors. Here are some of the tools that will be utilized:

  - ImGoing Software - ImGoing is an API feed that pulls up-to-date and original photos and content from various social media platforms. This feed is updated several times a week and showcases photos from local businesses and vacationers right on our homepage.

## CONVERSIONS

Tracking a direct correlation between marketing efforts and actual rental home bookings has always been a challenge. We have refined our marketing funnel and tested a number of different conversion actions throughout our website. These actions are considered integral to the overall sales funnel and we continue to drive traffic and retarget users to ensure they reach these conversion zones.

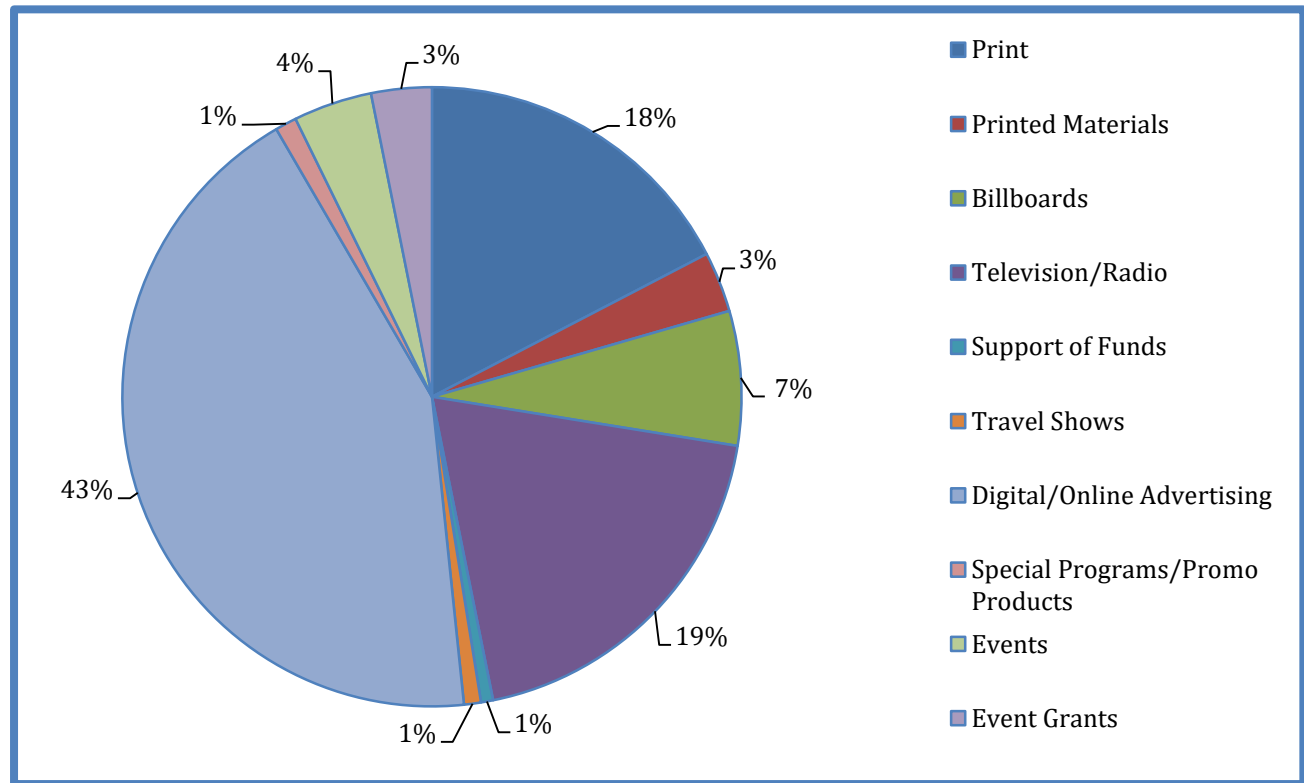
- Current conversion actions include:
  - Visitor Guide Requests
  - Digital Visitor Guide
  - Lodging Page Visit & Clicks
  - Specials Page
  - Contact Us Page

These pages/actions show a higher level of interest in the Currituck Outer Banks and encourage visitors to contact local rental agencies or the visitor centers for more information.

- Another conversion that we track is traffic to our website from our digital advertising. We will continue to look at our conversion originations and adapt strategy as necessary.
- In addition, it is important to identify and plan for regular communications with our local tourism partners (i.e. attractions, lodging, or restaurants) to ensure that they are aware of our marketing efforts and to complement strategies when appropriate. This is done
- The Tourism Advisory Board, comprised of seven tourism industry professionals who serve for two-year terms, meets five times per fiscal year and plays an integral part in the marketing strategy by reviewing and making suggestions utilizing their unique insights. This board also brings real-time, current issues to the table that allow the director and marketing director to shift marketing strategy and dollars to address a constantly changing tourism landscape.

## MARKETING TACTICS FOR 2020-2021

We employ several different marketing and advertising outlets as tactics to support our marketing strategy. The advertising budget for 2020-2021 is \$3,166,500 and is allocated to the following media types:



### PRINT

Following are the publications we will use for the 2020-2021 year:

- **National:** Publications such as Garden & Gun, Southern Living, and Real Simple Magazine. Garden & Gun and Real Simple have HHI of well over \$120k, which is our typical target. Southern Living has a lower HHI, but is widely read by females who are still very much part of the vacation planning process for their families. For those publications, we would market family reunions for larger vacation parties. While geographic targeting is not available with these publications, the national exposure is great for branding purposes and the potential to open up new markets
- **Regional:** Publications that represent some of our largest feeder markets are used to saturate those markets and keep consistent messaging in front of readers during peak vacation planning times. Northern Virginia Magazine, Virginia Living, North Carolina State Travel Guide, Cary Magazine and Our State Magazine hit our top feeder markets and provide great value for the exposure.



- Regional Co-ops: The State of North Carolina Tourism Department offers annual partner programs at a reduced cost to destinations. We typically participate in the Northern Market Combo, which includes ads in the following publications: Blue Ridge Country, Cleveland Magazine, Columbus Monthly, Nashville Lifestyle, Pittsburgh Magazine and Richmond Magazine
- Local: Local publications are mainly used during the peak season to market events and attractions to vacationers who are in market. Outer Banks Magazine, North Beach Sun, The Coast and the Duck/Corolla Guide are used to promote weekly events at Historic Corolla Park and other annual events.
- Niche: Publications that focus on a specific niche like hunting or weddings are used during respective seasons to promote our area to those markets (Vow Bride, The Knot, American Waterfowler, NC Hunt and Fish Guide and Wildfowl).

## DIGITAL

With over 80% of travel research and destination decisions and purchases being made online, digital advertising comprises the largest segment of our advertising spend.

- Gone are the days of local and regional competition. We are now competing for vacation dollars on a global level due to the worldwide use of the internet and mobile devices and the ability of even small destinations to advertise on these platforms.

- Consider that 70% of travelers with smartphones have done travel research on their smartphone.

***Taking these numbers into consideration, it is vitally important that Currituck has a user-friendly, responsive presence on all digital platforms.***

Following are our digital tactics to generate user interest to convert to actual visitors to Currituck:

- Paid Search: The largest percentage of our advertising dollars goes towards paid search/display on Google, Bing and Yahoo. It is a fluid campaign that changes almost daily. Campaigns are split tested and optimized to increase conversions and lower CPC. Split testing (also referred to as A/B testing or multivariate testing) is a method of conducting controlled, randomized experiments with the goal of improving a website metric, such as clicks, form completions, or purchases. Incoming traffic to the website is distributed between the original (control) and the different variations without any of the visitors knowing that they are part of an experiment. The tester waits for a statistically significant difference in behavior to emerge. The results from each variation are compared to determine which version showed the greatest improvement.

- **Retargeting:** These campaigns start with building a pool of users who do not convert from our paid search campaigns. Our ads follow users around the internet for a given amount of time until they decide to click back to our site, or convert by viewing/requesting a Visitor Guide. These user groups have already shown interest in our destination and typically convert at a higher rate than those who have never heard of the area.
- **Paid Social:** Paid social ads on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest take advantage of our large social following. Social ads allow us to target at a much more detailed level and gain valuable insights on which demographic groups are responding the best to certain types of ads. Social campaigns are also split tested to find the best headlines and images that convert.
- **Geo-Fencing:** Geo-fencing allows us to put a virtual fence around a specific area and serve ads to people within that area. For example, we can geo-fence a large event, such as an art show and serve attendees ads that promote Under the Oaks Art Festival. We can also geo-fence around shopping malls during the holidays to promote family vacations to those who may be struggling to figure out the perfect gift for their family.
- **Video Advertising:** We have the benefit of having a videographer on staff that is continuously getting amazing footage and creating videos for our YouTube and Vimeo channels. Those channels will continue to grow and specific ad campaigns promoting those channels will help increase subscribers.

## **BILLBOARDS**

- **Digital Boards:** Event announcements and seasonal messaging is used on a rotation of 6 digital billboards in the Hampton Roads area. These sit along the major highways in the region and are very visible. We are able to switch these out at any time during the year.
- **Static Boards:** About a dozen static boards are used throughout the Mainland corridor. Boards that are facing southbound traffic are used to promote things to do in Corolla (i.e. horse tours, horse safety, Whalehead, Historic Jarvisburg Colored School, Historic Corolla Park). Boards that are facing northbound traffic are used to promote things on the Mainland or activities that visitors can do on future visits (i.e. CCRC, Weddings, Knotts Island, and Hunting).

## **TELEVISION**

TV is purchased on broadcast stations and aired during time slots that primarily target women between the ages of 35 and 55 with a HHI of \$120k or higher. The goal of each TV campaign is to raise brand awareness and keep our destination top of mind with potential visitors. Connected TV allows us to better target our ads and receive more detailed analytics on view rates. Connected TV (CTV) is simply a television that connects to the internet; Smart TV's, Apple TV's, devices like Tivo and Roku and gaming consoles like Xbox and PlayStation. Chances are you probably already own

one or more of these devices which is one of the reasons CTV is so appealing for advertisers; it already has incredible market penetration.

<b>Fall Buy (Broadcast)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Norfolk, Virginia Beach</li> <li>DC / Northern VA</li> <li>Philadelphia</li> <li>Pittsburgh</li> <li>Richmond</li> <li>Cleveland</li> <li>Raleigh</li> <li>Charlotte</li> <li>Greensboro</li> </ul>	<b>Fall Buy – Connected TV (i.e. Streaming Apps)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New York</li> <li>New Jersey</li> <li>Connecticut</li> <li>Tennessee</li> </ul>	<b>Spring Buy (Broadcast)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Norfolk, Virginia Beach</li> <li>DC / Northern VA</li> <li>Philadelphia</li> <li>Pittsburgh</li> <li>Richmond</li> <li>Cleveland</li> <li>Raleigh</li> <li>Charlotte</li> <li>Greensboro</li> <li>Baltimore</li> </ul>	<b>Spring Buy (Connected TV – Streaming)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New York</li> <li>New Jersey</li> <li>Connecticut</li> <li>Tennessee</li> </ul>
--	---	---	---

## Roku Streaming App

New this year is a Visit Currituck & Corolla Roku Channel. This is a great opportunity to showcase all that Currituck has to offer. Users with a Roku connected device can download the channel and have access to exclusive content that is created by staff and showcases local businesses, attractions and more. Live streaming events through the channel will also be available later in the year.

## Radio

Local radio is purchased through East Carolina Radio and JAM Media. These stations run commercials for events and seasonal messages throughout the year. The use of radio is to inform our visitors about ongoing events and to convert visitors in the Dare County region to come to Currituck for visitation spending. We also utilize live remote broadcasts at our events to help spread the word even further and to drive traffic, in real-time, to the event.

Regional radio campaigns will be tested this year through WUNC radio, which is a well followed group of stations out of Raleigh, NC.

## Public Relations

Public Relations focus on the following areas:

- Promotion utilizing Twitter

- Travel shows to promote our beaches and Mainland
- Hosting travel writers and social media influencers
  - For 2020-2021, Public Relations has identified three writers/influencers that we would like to host and include: Thom Nickels, Huff Post, Free Press, Pj Media, etc.; Ron Johnson, Get Out There Magazine; and Lynne Brandon, journalist and social media from Greensboro NC with a large following in the travel and tourism industry.
- Overseeing the fulfillment of requests for guides
- Regular distribution of press releases
- Employing Cision, a program utilizing the largest global media database, to track our earned media mentions. Earned Media is when customers, the press and the public share your content and speak about your brand. Think of it as the social media equivalent of “word-of-mouth” publicity. These mentions are “earned,” meaning they are voluntarily given by others. Earned media is authentic content provided by people who are not employed by your company and when a trusted influencer writes about your store or products, a single article can reach thousands of potential customers.

For 2020, the following shows have been identified to continue our presence in our top feeder markets and to showcase our area to emerging markets:

- Boston, MA - Jan11-12, 2020
- Columbus, OH - Feb 7-9, 2020
- Atlanta, GA - Feb29-Mar1, 2020
- Washington, DC - Mar7-8, 2020
- Philadelphia, PA - Mar 14-15, 2020
- Nashville, TN - Mar 26-29, 2020

Last year, Travel & Tourism attended the following shows and generated 5,160 leads from these shows:

- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Chicago, Illinois
- Washington, DC
- Long Island, NY
- Columbus, Ohio

## Social Media

Social Media is integral to the success of our marketing strategy and supports the three pillars/goals of Currituck Travel & Tourism along with additional goals unique to its technology. These include:

- Being the voice of Currituck County Tourism

- Growing overnight lodging and tourism revenues to Currituck County
- Advancing the Currituck County tourism experience beyond the beach
- Sparking inspiration with visitors by posting beautiful imagery and captivating stories
- Responding to comments, questions and concerns in a timely manner to boost engagement and foster relationships

### **Social Media Audit**

- **Facebook**
  - What it's best for: Inspiration, Visitor Engagement, Encouraging return visits
  - Target audience: Potential, First Time and Returning
  - Types of content we will share: Photos, Videos, Event info
  - Key performance indicators (KPIs): Engagement
  - Comments: Informing, answering questions about the area and ordinances
  - Strengths: We know our audience, many top contributors
- **Instagram**
  - What it's best for: Inspiration, Visitor Engagement, Encouraging return visits
  - Target audience: Potential, First Time and Returning
  - Types of content we will share: Photos and Videos
  - Key performance indicators (KPIs): Likes and Shares
  - Strengths: Continuing to grow
- **Twitter**
  - What it's best for: Information and Updates
  - Target audience: First time and Returning
  - Types of content we will share: Photos and News Links
  - Key performance indicators (KPIs): Likes and Retweets
  - Strengths: Continuing to grow

## Target Audience

	Potential	First-Time	Returning
Description	A visitor who has never visited, but has shown interest in our area.	Visitors who are here for the first time.	Visitors who have visited 1 or more times in the past.
Needs(s)	Basic travel information, lodging, things to do, dining, shopping	Navigational tools, itinerary ideas, safety information	Specials, new attractions, new restaurants
Pain Point(s)	Too much information on vacation destinations.	Potential bad experience, bad weather, hurricanes, change in travel habits (i.e. Millennials)	Hurricanes (weather events), shark attacks, drownings
Preferred social network(s)	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter
Geographic Targets	WV, TN, GA, CT, IL (try to open up new markets)	PA, VA, NC, NJ, NY, OH, MD, VT, MA	PA, VA, NC, NJ, NY, OH, MD, VT, MA

## Objectives, Goals and Metrics for Social Media

Business objective	Social Media Goal	Metric(s)
Grow the brand	Awareness <i>(these metrics illuminate your current and potential audience)</i>	Followers, shares, etc.
Turn customers into advocates	Engagement <i>(these metrics show how audiences are interacting with your content)</i>	Comments, likes, @mentions, etc.
Drive Website Traffic	Conversions <i>(these metrics demonstrate the effectiveness of your social engagement)</i>	Website clicks, email signups, Visitor Guide Requests
Improve customer retention	Consumer <i>(these metrics reflect how active customers think and feel about your brand)</i>	Testimonials, social media sentiment, etc.



## Social Media Competitive Analysis

Destination	Active Networks & Followers	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Outer Banks (Dare County)</b>	Facebook – 746,00 Instagram – 99,000 Twitter – 41,000	Large following, brand recognition, good website, miles of beach, unique attractions, history	No horses, repost same content on both Facebook and twitter, no twitter engagement, no consistent Facebook engagement unless post is boosted
<b>VA Beach</b>	Facebook – 257,000 Instagram – 45,000 Twitter – 17,000	Plenty of accommodations, restaurants and concert series (i.e. Something in the Water Festival), Organic promotion by local news organizations located in the area	Same content posted on both Facebook and twitter, lack of engagement, very commercial, negative news
<b>Crystal Coast</b>	Facebook – 183,000 Instagram – 27,000 Twitter – 8,244	Lots of different beaches, horses, closer drive from Charlotte and Raleigh	Same content posted on both Facebook and twitter, more exposed to hurricanes, low engagement on Facebook

## Posting Schedule for 2020-2021

SOCIAL NETWORK	TIME (EST)	CONTENT TYPE
<b>MONDAY</b>		
FACEBOOK - COBX	9:00 AM	Monday Distraction: Time to book a vacation or something to allow followers to pretend they are not at work.
	4:30 PM	Inspirational – Sunrise, Sunsets, Horse, Moonrise, Other Landscape
FACEBOOK - WH	11:00 AM	Must Do Monday – Whalehead/Historic Corolla Park Activity
INSTAGRAM	7:00 PM	Inspirational
<b>TUESDAY</b>		
FACEBOOK - COBX	9:00 AM	Event Promotion
	4:30 PM	Partner Share
FACEBOOK - WHALEHEAD	11:00 AM	Historic Corolla Park – Fun Facts, Things to Do
INSTAGRAM	7:00 PM	Re-post Local Business
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>		
FACEBOOK - COBX	9:00 AM	Wild Horse Wednesday – Horse facts, history, horse rules
	4:30 PM	Mainland Post – Canvas layout
FACEBOOK - WHALEHEAD	11:00 AM	Events Promo
INSTAGRAM	7:00 PM	Inspirational
TWITTER	11:30 AM	Retweet – Partner ( Week 1: Restaurant, Week 2: Retail, Week 3: Activity/Attraction, Week 4: Lodging
<b>THURSDAY</b>		
FACEBOOK - COBX	9:00 AM	Throwback Thursday – Area History
	4:30 PM	Wildlife Photo / Information
FACEBOOK - WH	11:00 AM	Throwback Thursday
INSTAGRAM	7:00 PM	Re-post
<b>FRIDAY</b>		
FACEBOOK - COBX	9:00 AM	TGIF – Trending Weekend Activities
	4:30 PM	Inspirational – Sunrise, Sunsets, Horse, Moonrise, Other Landscape
FACEBOOK - WHALEHEAD	11:00 AM	Fun Fact Friday
INSTAGRAM	7:00 PM	Inspirational
TWITTER	11:30 AM	Newsworthy/Retweet TGIF
<b>SATURDAY</b>		
FACEBOOK - COBX	10:00 AM	Sunrise Saturday
<b>SUNDAY</b>		
FACEBOOK - COBX	10:00 AM	Stay Safe Sunday
	3:00 PM	Stay Safe Sunday

## Videography

In 2020-2021, videography will capture footage that focuses on the interests of our target audiences. Videography, as it has in previous years, will continue to advertise the Corolla and Currituck brand by visually telling the unique stories that bring visitors back year after year and to inspire those, who have yet to come, to book their vacations.

### **Projects for 2020-2021 to support our website, TV commercials, and social media platforms:**

- Restaurants and Recipes of Corolla and Currituck
- Shopping and Spas in Corolla and Currituck
- Recreational Activities on the Outer Banks
- A Day on the Beach
- Corolla/Currituck Artists
- Weddings
- Local Events and Tourism Events
- History of the Outer Banks/Currituck
  - Historic Jarvisburg Colored School Documentary
  - History of Currituck
  - Stories that will support the Currituck Maritime Museum (Fishing, Crabbing, Duck Hunting, Boat Building)
  - Life Saving Stations
  - Lighthouse
  - Whalehead and Historic Corolla Park (Bridge)
  - Wild Horses
  - Corolla Village
  - Shipwrecks of the Atlantic
  - History of Grave Digger
- Sports Tourism
  - CCRC – Horse Shows, Fishing, Kayaking, Nature Trail
  - Maple Park – Baseball, Softball, Soccer, Skate Park, Playground, Etc.
- Beach Safety
- Lodging (footage for commercials)
  - Vacation Rentals

### **TV Commercials (Short Format – 15, 30, 60 seconds):**

- 2019 - Fall Commercials
- 2020 - Winter/Spring/Summer Commercials

### **TV Commercials (Long Format – 30 minutes):**

- 2020-2021 – We are planning on producing 1 long format video that can be placed in all of our markets. The longer format will include a host and multiple topics.

**Channels That Video Will Support:**

- Local PEG Channel
- Social Media
  - YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, Instagram
- Website
- TV and Streaming TV

## EVENTS

The Travel & Tourism Department produces and staffs several events during the year to boost visitation and provide amenities to our guests.

***Events that are free to attend include:***

- Under the Oaks Art Festival (June)
- Independence Day Celebration (July)
- End of Summer Beach Blast (August)
- Currituck Bulls & BBQ – Includes Kansas City BBQ Competition and Rodeo (November)
- Kids Day at the Park (8 dates) – bouncy house, Pirate themed escape room, fire truck and Corolla Wild Mustang when available, and food (Thursdays, June through mid-August)
- Creepy in Corolla (Halloween – October)
- Yoga in the Park (Tuesdays, June through mid-September)

***Events that have an admission fee and generate funds to help support Historic Corolla Park and Whalehead include:***

- Cornhole Tournaments (17 dates) – (Wednesdays, end of May through mid-September)
- Corolla Cork & Craft (13 dates) – (Wednesdays, mid-June through mid-September)
- Rental of Whalehead grounds for events and weddings – staff must be present (all year)
- Joan's Way Tours (8 dates) – (Thursdays, June through mid-August)
- Christmas in Corolla Whalehead Tours – 4 weekends, 7 tours (end of November through December)
- Epicurean Evening at Whalehead – limited space tour and hunt dinner at Whalehead (Spring)

## COMPETITION

Currituck County competes with destinations all over the world. However, it has two key unique differentiators that continue to drive visitation:

***The Corolla Wild Spanish Mustangs that roam freely in the off-road area of Currituck***



***Driving on the 4x4 beaches***





Other competitive advantages that Currituck enjoys, as identified by our visitors, include:



Where we are lacking in the competitive field is the ability to host shorter vacations. The majority of our accommodations are vacation rentals that entail a seven-day rental period. This limits the ability of the vacationer to book a long weekend or quick getaway. We have two hotels in Corolla that, combined, boast less than 200 rooms. Due to this shortage of hotel rooms, we are also not able to tap into large group or conference/convention travel.

The Outer Banks of Dare County can arguably be considered our biggest competitor. However, visitors to Currituck County and Dare County do not distinguish the destination based on county. They are going to “the Outer Banks” and view the municipalities / townships (Corolla, Nags Head, Kill Devil Hills, etc.) as the destination. Therefore, we do participate in some tourism initiatives with the Dare County Outer Banks Visitors Bureau and benefit indirectly from their marketing efforts. In terms of demographics, Duck, NC could be considered our biggest competitor in the Outer Banks region.

**In spite of these disadvantages, what is truly astounding is that, on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being “not at all likely” and 5 being “will definitely return)” the likelihood of our visitors to return in 4.9. And 20.2% of our visitors have returned 21+ times to vacation on our shores. This indicates a brand loyalty and family visitation that is truly remarkable and needs to continue to be nurtured. Our brand of upscale, family-friendly, pristine, un-crowded and beautiful beaches set amidst an unspoiled natural environment is strong.**

### WHO WE ARE

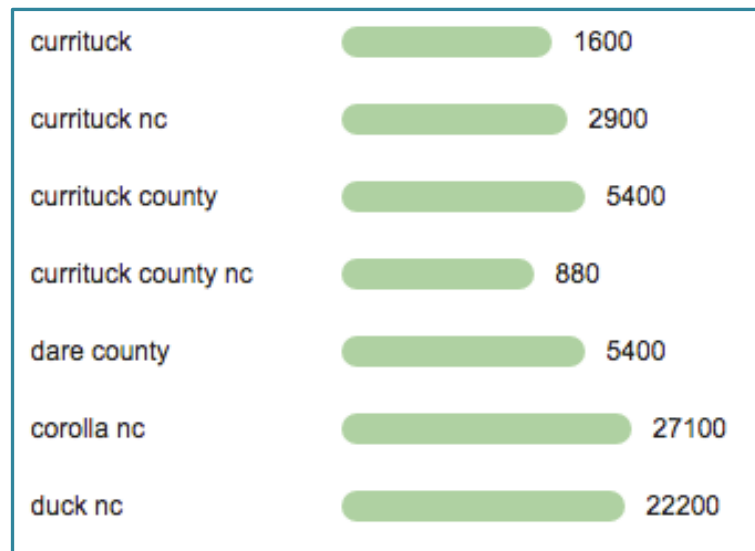
Research indicates that we continue to have a strong brand for our destination, mainly the beaches of Corolla. This strong brand, however, includes vulnerable assets that set us apart from other beach destinations – the 4x4 beaches and the Corolla Wild Horses. As a county, we must continue to preserve, protect and nurture these assets when making future planning and infrastructure decisions.

In addition, our tourism economy, which relies heavily on our beaches, is vulnerable to outside forces such as flooding and hurricanes, and as we have discovered in 2020, international pandemics. As the number one economic driver of Currituck, the loss of the revenue generated by tourism spending, for even a year or two, could have a devastating effect for the residents of Currituck County, particularly in property tax. We are also vulnerable in ways that we never anticipated –COVID-19 shut down our beaches to visitors and continues to impact visitation sales tax. It is vital for Currituck to look to grow tourism assets on the Mainland and Knotts Island including, but not limited to:

- Sports and equestrian tourism
- Golf tourism
- Historic tourism (the Old Currituck Jail and the Historic Jarvisburg Colored School)
- Birding
- Beer and wine enthusiasts
- Water based tourism activities such as kayaking, platform camping, hunting, etc.

### ONLINE SEARCH

It was apparent in the Chandlerthinks research that visitors to Currituck County do not identify with Currituck County or Currituck Outer Banks as the beach destination but, rather, Corolla. This is evident in the Google Search findings below. It is interesting to note “corolla nc” is searched more often than “duck nc,” our upscale neighbor directly to the south of Corolla. Please refer to the following table on Page 34.



As search engines are integral to online visitor research, these findings have prompted two immediate responses. First, the Travel & Tourism department has purchased several domain names for search purposes that contain the word “corolla,” the main domains being [www.corollanc.com](http://www.corollanc.com) and [www.visitcorollanc.com](http://www.visitcorollanc.com). We have begun to use these two domain name in print, video and online advertising, although still retaining the Currituck Outer Banks logo. We are also incorporating the word “Corolla” into all advertising for the beach in all media.

## CURRITUCK BRANDING PROJECT

The Board of Commissioners, understanding the importance of a unified brand, is contracting with Chandlerthinks to do a Currituck County branding project that explores the brand beyond tourism. With the results of this project, brand identity will be codified and promoted and logos for the County, Economic Development and Tourism (both beaches and Mainland) will be reevaluated and redesigned as necessary.

Also, in order to expand tourism beyond the beach to the Currituck Mainland and to prepare for the unified branding project, the tourism department has also purchased domain names that include the word “currituck.” We already own the domain name, [www.visitcurrituck.com](http://www.visitcurrituck.com), which encompasses both the beaches (highest emphasis) and the Mainland. As we move forward with this project, all marketing for the Mainland and the beach will be reevaluated.

## **VISITOR CENTERS**

In order to improve the visitor experience, the tourism department is conducting ongoing surveys regarding the quality of the visitor centers with guests who walk through our doors. This also includes the Whalehead. This will help us to quickly address any problem areas as they arise.

## **EVENT SURVEYS**

The event staff is conducting surveys at our events in order to help us improve the visitor experience and identify rectifiable issues.

## **YEARLY VISITOR SURVEY**

The tourism department will conduct a yearly online visitor survey to capture key metrics of our visitors.

## REPORTING

Reporting serves to give the tourism department benchmarks and assists in spotting trends both positive and negative. One of our key reports is visitation to our visitor centers. Following is a comparative year over year to date report on the Moyock Welcome Center and the Corolla Visitor Center. Please note that our visitor centers closed down in March of 2020 due to the pandemic and this is reflected in the numbers.

	July 1, 2017 to June 16, 2018	July 1, 2018 to June 16, 2019	July 1, 2019 to June 16, 2020
<b>Moyock Welcome Center</b>	67,092	76,176	45,519
<b>Corolla Visitor Center</b>	41,975	48,283	39,964

Visitor centers are important to the tourism department as it provides an opportunity to educate visitors on the attractions, assets, businesses and amenities of our County. It also provides an opportunity to educate and convert to day trippers visitors who are vacationing in Dare County. Out of county day trippers contribute to the overall tourism economy by spending money in Currituck (equating to property tax relief to Currituck County residents).

Other vital statistics for Travel & Tourism are our website statistics. As a benchmark, here is a comparison of the last three fiscal years running from July 1 to June 30.

	Fiscal Year 2017- 2018	Fiscal Year 2018- 2019	Fiscal Year 2019- 2020
<b>Sessions</b>	677,528	727,236	931,361
<b>New Users</b>	538,283	565,681	761,695
<b>Bounce Rate</b>	71.51%	47.91%	36.77%
<b>Conversions*</b>	73,513 (10.85%)	84,669 (11.64%)	123,324 (13.24%)

\*The percentage point beside the conversion figure is the percentage of visitors to the website that completed a conversion action. The tourism industry conversion percentage is 3.5%, so Travel & Tourism is doing well convincing our web visitors to complete a conversion action, and we are doing much better than the average.

Travel & Tourism, in addition to visitor center numbers, will also be reporting comparative quarterly statistics (both year over year to date and month over month to date) on the following metrics:

- Occupancy Tax
- Facebook referrals to the website
- Email referrals to website and open rate
- Website traffic
- Top 5 website referral states
- Top 5 website searches
- Digital ad conversions to website
- Website conversions (guides, contact us, etc.)
- Meltwater earned media mentions
- Visitation to the CCRC
- Events booked at the Sports fields and the CCRC
- Organization meetings attended
- Press releases sent

Reports, along with the yearly Strategic and Marketing Plan, will be available in the Business Resources section of [www.visitcurrituck.com](http://www.visitcurrituck.com).

## ORGANIZATION AFFILIATIONS

Travel & Tourism belongs to several organizations to promote its assets, to have access to vital industry information and to create alliances and partnerships throughout the state of North Carolina. These organizations include:

- Visit NC
- North Carolina Travel Industry Association (NCTIA) / Destination Marketing Association of NC (DMANC)
- NC Sports Association
- NC Coast Host
- Historic Albemarle Tour
- NC Association of Festivals & Events
- NC Restaurant & Lodging Association
- Southeast Tourism Society
- Civil War Trails
- Travel & Tourism Research Association
- NC Horse Council
- Outer Banks Wedding Association
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- VR Edge
- American Association of Museums
- Southeastern Museums Conference
- Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce
- Currituck Chamber of Commerce

The Tourism Director also has a seat on the following boards:

- NCTIA Governor's Council Board
- NC Coast Host Board
- Ex officio member of the Currituck Chamber of Commerce Board
- Historic Jarvisburg Colored School Board
- Currituck YMCA Board
- Historic Maritime Museum Advisory Board

## **BUSINESS RESOURCES**

Tourism-related businesses in Currituck that have a brick and mortar storefront or an established home business enjoy a myriad of opportunities to advertise, free of charge, with the Travel & Tourism department. These include:

<b>Website listings on VisitCurrituck.com</b>
<b>Business rack cards or brochures in the Moyock Welcome Center and the Corolla Visitors Center</b>
<b>Inclusion in Visitors Guide and other publications</b>
<b>Listing on the Visit NC website</b>
<b>Co-op advertising opportunities such as the Discovery Map and occasional magazine co-ops</b>
<b>Lead Sharing</b>
<b>Display case promotion (Moyock Welcome Center)</b>
<b>Event assistance program which provides advertising dollars and opportunities to non-profit or for profit groups to boost their events with marketing strategy assistance and money</b>
<b>Event Grant program which provides up to \$20,000 for events being held in the County – this is a competitive process as no more than \$100,000 will be awarded in a given year (applications due December 31)</b>



**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**Bob White**, Chairman, District 1

**Selina Jarvis**, District 2

**Mike H. Payment**, Vice Chairman, District 3

**Paul M. Beaumont**, district 4

**J. Owen Etheridge**, District 5

**Mary “Kitty” Etheridge**, At-Large

**Kevin E. McCord**, At-large

**TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD**

**Ann Bell** (appointed by At-Large seat)

1<sup>st</sup> Term ends November 30, 2020

**Benjamin Beasley** (appointed by At-Large seat)

BJ’s Carolina Café

**Todd Cartwright** (appointed by District 1 seat)

**Doug Brindley** (appointed by District 2 seat)

Brindley Beach Vacations & Sales

**Sharon Price** (appointed by District 3 seat)

Always N Bloom

**Keith Dix** (appointed by District 4 seat)

Keighlight Productions, Inc.

**Sophie Bennewitz** (appointed by District 5 seat)

Weeping Radish

Tourism Development Authority Appointee:

**Bob White**, Commissioner

Ex-officio Staff Members:

**Ben Stikeleather**, Currituck County Manager

**Tameron Kugler**, Director, Department of Travel & Tourism