

TOURISM

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Frederick County and the surrounding areas play host every year to nationally recognized events such as the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival and Belle Grove Civil War living history reenactments. The area is home to the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley, the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historic Park, the North-South Skirmish, various year-round live theater and performance centers, a revitalized and vibrant Old Town Winchester, and other key assets such as orchards, farm markets, historic homes, battlefields, and natural resources that bring travelers and their tourism dollars to the area.

The County also supports a growing number of wineries and the potential for new craft breweries and distilleries, as well as outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities such as the Tuscarora hiking trail, an ATV trail, seasonal navigable waterways, and access to regional amenities such as the Appalachian Trail, Shenandoah River, and the Shenandoah National Park.

As the economy improves and travel increases, it is critical that the County be poised to capitalize on the growth in travel and tourism. The Winchester–Frederick County Convention and Visitors Bureau, a city/county tourism marketing partnership, is a key component in developing the marketing strategy to attract additional visitors, and subsequent spending, to the area.

The economic impact of travel and tourism reaches every citizen of Frederick County (each household pays less each year in local & state taxes due to the revenue generated by tourism) by providing employment and tax revenues. Tourism also helps to support a diverse portfolio of local events, attractions and activities and thereby contributes to the quality of life for residents.

FOCUS FOR THE FUTURE

First impressions often set the tone for a visitor’s experience, and the great majority of travelers arrive in Frederick County through its roadways. The character of Frederick County’s entrance corridors, especially in areas adjacent to the city of Winchester, is a key factor for the visitor’s experience and their decision to stay longer and hopefully return. Enhancing the aesthetics and traffic flow of these corridors will improve visitor impressions and will benefit the quality of life for residents.

Frederick County should concentrate on strengthening its ability to attract an increasing number of overnight visitors through targeted, strategic, and collaborative branding and marketing efforts that focus on visitor experiences. The ultimate goal will be to enhance the visitor experience.

Agritourism

Agritourism takes place on a farm or ranch and may include the opportunity to assist with the day-to-day activities associated with running the farm or to participate in the use of these lands for outdoor related events or activities. The term *agritourism* has also been broadened now to include wineries, breweries, and distilleries, which, combined, are the hottest trend in tourism product development in the Commonwealth. Agritourism is discussed at length in the following section of this chapter.

GOALS/STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: RECOGNIZE DIVERSIFIED LAND USE FOR TOURISM RELATED ACTIVITIES

STRATEGIES:

- Ensure that business owners are supported in their efforts to bring tourism activities to the local consumer market
- Continue to support rural agribusiness such as breweries, wineries, and distilleries.

GOAL 2: LINK THE AREA'S VISITOR ATTRACTIONS WITH A TRAIL NETWORK THAT FACILITATES NON-VEHICULAR MOVEMENT

STRATEGIES:

- Work with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) and surrounding jurisdictions to update and improve the regional bicycle and pedestrian plan, "Walking and Wheeling in the Northern Shenandoah Valley".
- Support the Redbud Run Greenway project to provide a trail network that will link natural areas, battlefields, including the existing five-mile trail on the Civil War Preservation Trust property, schools, and other facilities in the Redbud Run corridor.

GOAL 3: PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF FREDERICK COUNTY'S ROADWAYS

STRATEGIES:

- Foster a compact community design that uses traditional building features to maintain Frederick County's unique historic character.
- Focus development in compact centers, using Neighborhood Design guidelines, and keeping the rural, agricultural landscape as part of the visitor experience in Frederick County.