



EXPERIENCE **FAYETTEVILLE**

**DESTINATION
MASTER PLAN**
2025-2035

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Dear Fayetteville Community,

Fayetteville has earned its reputation as one of the most vibrant and welcoming destinations in the region. Our city boasts a thriving economy, exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities, and a unique vibe that residents and visitors cherish. From world-class cycling trails and stunning green spaces to a dynamic arts and music scene and renowned restaurants, Fayetteville offers something for everyone. These remarkable amenities not only attract visitors but also enhance the quality of life for our residents, funding local services and creating a community we are proud to call home.

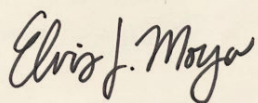
Experience Fayetteville's Destination Master Plan looks ahead and sets forth an ambitious vision for the next decade. It is the culmination of extensive research, community engagement, and a commitment to keep Fayetteville's distinct character at the heart of its growth. This plan aims to ensure that Fayetteville continues to thrive as a premier destination, balancing the needs of visitors and residents while fostering economic vitality and community pride.

In the months ahead, we will be introducing this plan to the public, sharing its vision, and inviting community members to join us in bringing it to life. The plan is a roadmap, but its success depends on the collaboration, creativity, and enthusiasm of all who care about Fayetteville. Together, we can shape a future that preserves the soul of our city while embracing new opportunities.

This plan would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of many. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our residents, who shared their insights and passion for Fayetteville; the hospitality industry professionals, local outdoor recreation enthusiasts, and organizations who bring our city to life; the Fayetteville Advertising & Promotion Commissioners for their vision and support; the City of Fayetteville for their partnership in enhancing our community; and the University of Arkansas for its longstanding partnership in establishing Fayetteville as a premier SEC college town.

The Destination Master Plan is more than a vision for the future—it's a call to action. Fayetteville's story is one of collaboration, resilience, and growth, and we each have a role to play in shaping its next chapter. I encourage you to join us in supporting and implementing this plan. Together, we can ensure Fayetteville remains an inspiring, welcoming, and thriving city for generations to come.

With gratitude and optimism,



Elvis Moya

Fayetteville Advertising & Promotion Commissioner

INTRODUCTION



FAYETTEVILLE STANDS OUT

as a uniquely attractive, community-centric city that has built a warm and welcoming local culture and energy that is unlike any other place. Its appeal is evident in the significant population growth of recent years and in its draw as a travel destination. As the community grows, Experience Fayetteville plays an important role, strengthening economic vitality through tourism while enriching the quality of life and character of Fayetteville.

Ensuring a vibrant future for Fayetteville and its tourism economy, Experience Fayetteville acknowledges the need for bold, thoughtful, long-range planning. This Destination Master Plan was developed through extensive community engagement, thorough research, and a commitment to enhance the experience of Fayetteville for residents and visitors alike, now and into the future.



FAYETTEVILLE DESTINATION TRENDS

Research demonstrates a need for thoughtful tourism planning in Fayetteville, ensuring the destination is prepared to welcome more visitors and residents as well as maintain and improve the quality of life for residents into the future.

Growth

The City of Fayetteville has seen tremendous growth since 1990, growing roughly 15% over each decade compared to 10% national population growth.ⁱ Population density has nearly tripled since 1990, and the population at the University of Arkansas has grown to more than 33,000 students.ⁱⁱ Numerous sporting and other events at the University draw large numbers of visitors to Fayetteville regularly.

Assets

Fayetteville has excellent tourism assets and the potential to expand those offerings even further. Sports tourism is a growing sector in the industry. Existing assets such as cycling trails and facilities at the University, paired with the potential for additional developments around the city, present exciting growth opportunities for Fayetteville. An

asset assessment of the destination pointed to the density of tourism draws in the Downtown area.ⁱⁱⁱ Lodging may need to expand to fully benefit from these assets. Targeted development that serves specific, strategic destination opportunities, such as large-room capacity near the Fayetteville Town Center, will be an important consideration to ensure developments are well-placed and serve future needs.

Visitation

Fayetteville welcomed an estimated 7.1 million visitors in 2022 comprised of 3.6 million overnight visitors and 3.5 million day visitors. These visitors injected an estimated \$600 million in spending into the local economy. Nearly three-fourths of these visitors (72%) were repeat visitors to Fayetteville, and compared to the national average (48%), Fayetteville attracted more marketable trips (54%). Marketable trips can be influenced by marketing as opposed to trips for business or to visit friends and family (VFR). Marketable trips tend to yield more visitor spending than VFR trips, given that visitors are more likely to stay in hotels and eat in restaurants.^{iv}





Visitors

Visitors cite their top reasons for traveling to Fayetteville as special events, to experience the outdoors, and touring. Fayetteville’s visitors are twice as likely as the average US traveler to visit for a special event, demonstrating the importance events play in the Fayetteville visitor economy. Fayetteville visitors are more likely to travel with children and twice as likely to have a travel party member with a disability.^v

Fayetteville’s visitors are four times more likely than the average US traveler to utilize CVB resources, paid advertising, and magazine articles to acquire trip planning information. This critical advantage offers more opportunities for Experience Fayetteville to influence visitor behavior and encourage patronage of Fayetteville businesses.^{vi}

Community

Welcoming visitors and improving the destination, when done with the community in mind, creates a place where residents have more dining and entertainment options, and public services are funded by the taxes generated by visitor spending.

In Fayetteville, community pride is a key driver in ensuring a vibrant visitor economy and a great visitor experience. A holistic, lasting tourism strategy must consider the priorities of residents and work toward preserving and improving quality of life.

Eighty percent of Fayetteville residents agree that the destination needs planned and controlled destination development, reinforcing the timeliness of this Destination Master Plan. There is progress to be made in making the connection between tourism in Fayetteville and the positive contributions it makes to residents’ quality of life. Only two in ten residents credit tourism for increasing their quality of life. Compared to their peers in the South and in the United States at large, Fayetteville residents are significantly more welcoming to visitors and proud of their destination.^{vii} Fayetteville’s residents, with their strong sense of community pride, make Fayetteville a welcoming and vibrant destination for visitors to experience.

METHODOLOGY



The development of the Experience Fayetteville Destination Master Plan took place in three phases:

**GET
CLEAR**

**GET
FOCUSED**

**GET
MOVING**



GET CLEAR

In the Get Clear discovery phase of plan development, Experience Fayetteville, with its partner Coraggio Group, led a robust and wide-ranging data gathering effort. Prior to writing the plan, Experience Fayetteville worked to ensure the core planning team was fully informed about the needs and experience of tourism stakeholders and residents and had a comprehensive understanding of Fayetteville's visitors and tourism assets.

THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WAS PERFORMED:

Review of background data provided by Experience Fayetteville

Infrastructure Assessment and Competitive Analysis

Marketing and Communications Assessment

Visitor Profile Study

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT:**

133
RESPONSES

**Stakeholder
Strategic
Planning Survey**

23
RESPONSES

TARGETED SAMPLE OF
INTERNAL EXPERTS

**Destination
Resilience
Assessment**



1,254
RESPONSES

Resident Sentiment Survey



3
SESSIONS
(2 IN PERSON, 1 VIRTUAL)

**Listening
Sessions**

18
INTERVIEWS

**1:1
Interviews**

TOTAL COMMUNITY TOUCH POINTS: 1,431

The purpose of this effort was to gather insights on the current state of tourism within Fayetteville, understand the Experience Fayetteville organization, and identify a set of key findings and recommendations to guide the tourism sector and organization's strategic direction.



FROM THIS RESEARCH, THE FOLLOWING THEMES WERE IDENTIFIED:

1

Fayetteville as a destination has a strong foundation of local culture and character, tourism product, and industry support on which to build.

2

Experience Fayetteville as an organization is well-positioned to address the current and future needs of the industry, utilizing the team's expertise and partnership-building.

3

Fayetteville requires a proactive approach to growth management and capacity building as a destination and community.

4

Outdoor recreation provides unique opportunities to strengthen Fayetteville's reputation and widen its offerings to visitors and residents.

5

Fayetteville has an opportunity to expand upon existing lodging offerings and event facilities and capacity to compete with peer cities for larger events.

6

Fayetteville can capitalize on its key differentiators, particularly as a welcoming college town with unique character and culture, to cement its competitive position.



GET FOCUSED

The Get Focused phase of the project was where the collaborative development of the plan took place. The Core Planning Team reviewed the research and themes, carefully considering and placing stakeholder and community input at the forefront when developing the plan.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION

With the full slate of research in hand, Experience Fayetteville reached back out to stakeholders who had participated and offered their insight during the Get Clear phase. During a virtual feedback session, community and industry stakeholders also reviewed the research and discussed priorities for the plan. This was an important step to not only close the loop with those who so graciously contributed their time and knowledge, but also to provide the full view of the data collected in addition to their contributions.

THE PRIORITIES

discussed in this Stakeholder Feedback Session directly link to the Imperatives and Initiatives of the Destination Master Plan, particularly:

Emphasizing data-driven marketing tactics to attract key audiences

Exploring the potential of events to further foster the culture Fayetteville is known for

Utilizing Fayetteville's current assets and ensuring a quality visitor experience

Growing sports tourism offerings and opportunities

PLANNING SESSIONS

Equipped with this guidance, Coraggio Group guided the Core Planning team through a series of exercises over four planning sessions to create the key elements of the Destination Master Plan:

STRATEGIC CLARITY

 **Vision**  **Mission**  **Position**

STRATEGIC FOCUS

 **Imperatives**  **Objectives**  **Initiatives**

The Core Planning Team worked to refine and finalize each element to ensure alignment with community priorities and to set the path toward the vision of Fayetteville's future.



GET MOVING

In the Get Moving phase, the Core Planning Team determined a set of Action Steps for each Initiative, clarifying how the plan will be set in motion to ensure momentum and ongoing progress.



**■ 2025-2035
DESTINATION
MASTER PLAN**



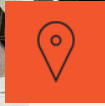
VISION

We envision a future in which visitors and residents find belonging in Fayetteville’s diverse experiences, abundant green spaces, and dynamic culture.



MISSION

We elevate the quality of life for the community of Fayetteville through tourism promotion, partnerships, and programs.



POSITION

Fayetteville welcomes visitors with an atmosphere of fun, energy, and hospitality. We stand apart through our...

Unmistakable sense of authenticity and genuine sense of community;

Unmatched location rich with urban amenities nestled within the breathtaking beauty of the Ozarks;

Variety of experiences in outdoor recreation, sports, dining, live music and theater, and world class cycling routes;

Energetic celebration of diversity; and

Residents eager to share the city they love.



IMPERATIVES

Experience Fayetteville's Destination Master Plan focuses its work in five key Imperatives. These areas of focus set priorities for the organization and its partners as they work to grow and develop Fayetteville's visitor economy and community vitality.

DRIVE VISITATION

**BRING OUT
THE BEST**

INSPIRE RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT

**KEEP
COMMUNITY
AT THE HEART**

BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS



DRIVE VISITATION

Tourism is a powerful economic driver and an opportunity to share the unique beauty of Fayetteville with the world. Experience Fayetteville will continue to further its role as the first stop for visitor information and as a leader in attracting visitors.



OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Increase average per visitor spend by 2% year over year^{viii}
- ▶ Increase average length of stay to 1.2 days by year three^{ix}



INITIATIVES

- ▶ Annually develop a data-driven and cohesive sales & marketing strategy
- ▶ Establish a baseline and consistently measure and report key datasets
- ▶ Become the first stop for trip planning
- ▶ Maintain Fayetteville's reputation as a welcoming destination for visitors



BRING OUT THE BEST

As destination experts and champions, Experience Fayetteville is committed to ensuring that Fayetteville shines. From hosting signature events to ensuring a quality experience for visitors, Experience Fayetteville will work to enhance and develop what makes Fayetteville a compelling and world-class destination.



OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Increase visitor satisfaction ratings to 65% "very satisfied" in four years^x
- ▶ Improve Fayetteville's product development effectiveness rating to 70% by year four^{xi}



INITIATIVES

- ▶ Help ensure a quality experience at Fayetteville's attractions
- ▶ Encourage and incentivize signature events
- ▶ Connect, broaden, and grow the outdoor experience



INSPIRE RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT

As Fayetteville grows both in population and visitation, investment in infrastructure and tourism assets is critical and requires particular attention. As the organization committed to both the visitor experience and resident quality of life, Experience Fayetteville supports and advocates for the tourism workforce and necessary asset developments.



OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Increase average stakeholder rating of the quality of overall tourism support structures to 65%, evaluating annually^{xii}
- ▶ Increase resident rating of quality of public services improved due to tourism by 2% every two years^{xiii}



INITIATIVES

- ▶ Support the tourism and hospitality economy workforce
- ▶ Develop and grow destination capacity
- ▶ Advance efforts to develop and improve sports, meeting, and recreation facilities



KEEP COMMUNITY AT THE HEART

Fayetteville's local culture is one of its greatest assets, nurturing creativity and a sense of community among residents. Experience Fayetteville's focus on residents, community partnerships, and local businesses and makers will ensure this unique local culture is preserved and heightened into the future.



OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Grow number and longevity of partnerships^{xiv}
- ▶ Increase average stakeholder rating of strong relationships with the local business economy to 75% by year three^{xv} by year four^{xi}



INITIATIVES

- ▶ Advance community partnerships in Fayetteville and across the NWA region
- ▶ Recognize residents as a key audience
- ▶ Prioritize local suppliers and vendors
- ▶ Provide spaces for community gathering
- ▶ Strengthen partnership with the University and its students





IMPROVE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Key to executing the initiative of a Destination Master Plan is a strong and high-functioning organization. Experience Fayetteville is committed to investing in its staff and internal infrastructure to maintain and enhance its capabilities and effectiveness.



OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Increase perception of Experience Fayetteville as an effective tourism organization to 85%^{xvi}
- ▶ Maintain employee satisfaction at or above 90%^{xvii}



INITIATIVES

- ▶ Invest in the Experience Fayetteville and Town Center team
- ▶ Maintain best-in-class organizational operations by leveraging best practices and research findings
- ▶ Explore paths to diversify Experience Fayetteville's funding to ensure financial sustainability



CORE PLANNING TEAM

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CEO, Experience Fayetteville

Tina Archer-Cope

Vice President of Sales,
Experience Fayetteville

Sarah King

Vice President of Marketing
and Communications,
Experience Fayetteville

Amy Stockton

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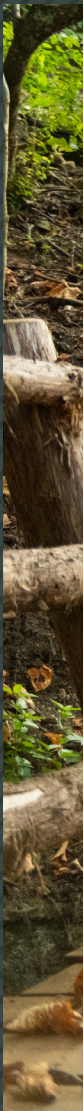
Vice President of Finance,
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for Fan Engagement and
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University of Arkansas
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Commissioner



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Experience Fayetteville and the Core Planning Team would like to thank the following groups for their contributions and support for this Destination Master Plan project. Without your expertise, insight, and participation, this plan would not have been possible.

Fayetteville Advertising & Promotion Commission

Industry and community members who participated in our survey, Town Halls, and Stakeholder Engagement Sessions

Our consulting partners at Coraggio Group

The staff of Experience Fayetteville and Fayetteville Town Center

And most importantly, the community of Fayetteville, Arkansas



END NOTES

- ⁱ Fayetteville Community Alignment Assessment: Understanding Resident and Visitor Use, Clarity of Place, May 2024.
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.uark.edu/about/quick-facts.php>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Fayetteville Community Alignment Assessment: Understanding Resident and Visitor Use, Clarity of Place, May 2024.
- ^{iv} Fayetteville Travel USA Visitor Profile, Longwoods International, presenting 2022 year-end data.
- ^v Fayetteville Travel USA Visitor Profile, Longwoods International, presenting 2022 year-end data.
- ^{vi} Fayetteville Travel USA Visitor Profile, Longwoods International, presenting 2022 year-end data.
- ^{vii} Fayetteville Resident Sentiment, Longwoods International, data collected March 12-April 8, 2024.
- ^{viii} Source: Longwoods Visitor Study
- ^{ix} Source: Average Nights in Destination as measured by Arrivalist
- ^x Source: Longwoods Visitor Study
- ^{xi} Source: Stakeholder Survey
- ^{xii} Source: Stakeholder Survey
- ^{xiii} Source: Resident Sentiment Survey
- ^{xiv} Source: Internal tracking of partnerships and length of partnership
- ^{xv} Source: Destination Resilience Assessment
- ^{xvi} Source: Stakeholder Survey
- ^{xvii} Source: Employee Engagement Survey

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