



Appalachian
Regional
Commission

Extending Our Welcome

Trends and
Strategies for
Tourism in
Appalachia



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Participant Quotes

The research team made considerable efforts to engage both visitors and stakeholders in the research process. This engagement was conducted both directly, through focus groups and interviews, and indirectly, through open-ended survey questions and comments. In order to allow for free and open discussion, participants were promised anonymity. As such, many quotes in this study are unattributed.

Charts and Graphs

Data labels in charts and graphs have been rounded to the nearest whole numbers. Figures of less than 1%, but more than zero, have been rounded to 1%. As a result, sums for these charts may not equal 100%.

Photographs

Cover photo by Wes Hicks / Unsplash.com. Thanks to Unsplash.com photographers for sharing their work throughout this report. All other photographs, unless otherwise noted, are by the authors.

The Appalachian Region

The Appalachian Region, as defined by this study, is limited to the 420 counties in the Appalachian Regional Commission's service area. This study does not assess trends or conditions in areas of Northern New York and New England that are part of the Appalachian Mountain chain. These areas, however, may find this study's findings both familiar and useful.

Extending Our Welcome

Trends and
Strategies for
Tourism in
Appalachia

Tim Ezzell, Ph.D.

University of Tennessee

Stefanie Benjamin, Ph.D.

University of Tennessee

Catherine Wilt

University of Tennessee

Bruce Decker

Collective Impact, LLC

Rachel Chen, Ph.D.

University of Tennessee

Emily Isaacs

University of Tennessee

Contributing Student Authors

Grace Medley

Alex Moore

Jamie Wilkerson

Creative Director

Bonnie Morris



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Foreword

This report represents two years of work by a team of researchers from the University of Tennessee and Collective Impact, LLC.

During this time, team members surveyed more than 500 visitors to Appalachia and over 700 regional tourism stakeholders. Team members also visited more than a dozen communities across eight states. Along the way, we stood with the Mothman, laughed with Lucy, dined in Pikeville, admired luxury RVs, and savored beer from an Eternal Tap.

Outsiders, and some insiders, sometimes view our region as “poor.” This study proves otherwise. Appalachia is a wealthy region—rich in resources, history, creativity, kindness, understanding, and hospitality. The Region has much to share, and our visitors, we have found, gain much from their time here.

Our team would like to express our appreciation to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for their support and enthusiasm for this project. We are especially grateful to Kostas Skordas and Logan Thomas for their guidance and assistance. We would also like to thank the members of this project’s advisory group for their informed guidance.

Lastly, we want to state our gratitude to all the people we met and talked with in our travels. Many scholars conduct research about Appalachia. Too few perform their research in partnership with the region and its people. From the outset, our research team sought to include our fellow Appalachians in our work. We did this not just to learn from them, but to also give them a voice in this process. Their thoughts, hopes, experiences, and frustrations are found throughout this work. We are grateful for their contributions and are humbled by their dedication to both their communities and their visitors.

*Tim Ezzell, Ph.D.
Knoxville
March 2020*

Contents

Executive Summary 6

1 Introduction 12

2 A Brief History of Appalachian Tourism 22

3 Literature Review. 28

4 The Appalachian Travel Economy 38

5 The Appalachian Visitor 46

 Case Study: Erwin, Tennessee 52

 Case Study: Red Bay, Alabama. 56

6 Internet, Media, and Social Media Use 60

 Case Study: Point Pleasant, West Virginia 70

7 Creating Quality Tourism Services 76

 Case Study: Pikeville, Kentucky 92

8 Improving Infrastructure and the Built Environment 96

 Case Study: Marietta, Ohio. 114

9 Promoting and Protecting Natural Assets 118

 Case Study: Coudersport, Pennsylvania. 134

10 Promoting Appalachia’s Cultural Heritage 138

 Case Study: Berea, Kentucky 148

 Case Study: Iuka, Mississippi and the Natchez Trace Parkway 152

11 Building a Culture of Tourism 156

 Case Study: Boone, North Carolina 168

 Case Study: St. Marys, Pennsylvania 172

12 The Appalachian Tourism Workforce 176

 Case Study: Jamestown, New York 190

 Case Study: Williamson, West Virginia 194

13 Measuring Tourism’s Success. 198

14 Conclusions and Recommendations 204

Executive Summary

Tourism and travel are among the oldest and most significant industries in the Appalachian Region (the Region). Its vast resources, have attracted visitors since colonial times. Today, travel is a \$60 billion industry in the 420 counties that make up the Region. Yet, while this industry is profoundly important and impactful, it also faces significant challenges, changes, and limitations. This report notes the opportunities and challenges that currently confront the industry in the Region. Among these findings are the following:

Tourism is travel, but not all travel is tourism.

Economists generally refer to tourism as part of the travel industry. That is because it is virtually impossible, even among skilled economists, to reliably differentiate between the two activities on a large scale. Travel includes tourism, but it also includes travel for other reasons—business, healthcare, family needs, and so forth. Many times, these activities also overlap with things we associate with tourism—such as dining

out, visiting a museum, or purchasing local art. As such, many conclusions we make about tourism, including those in this report, also apply to travel in general.

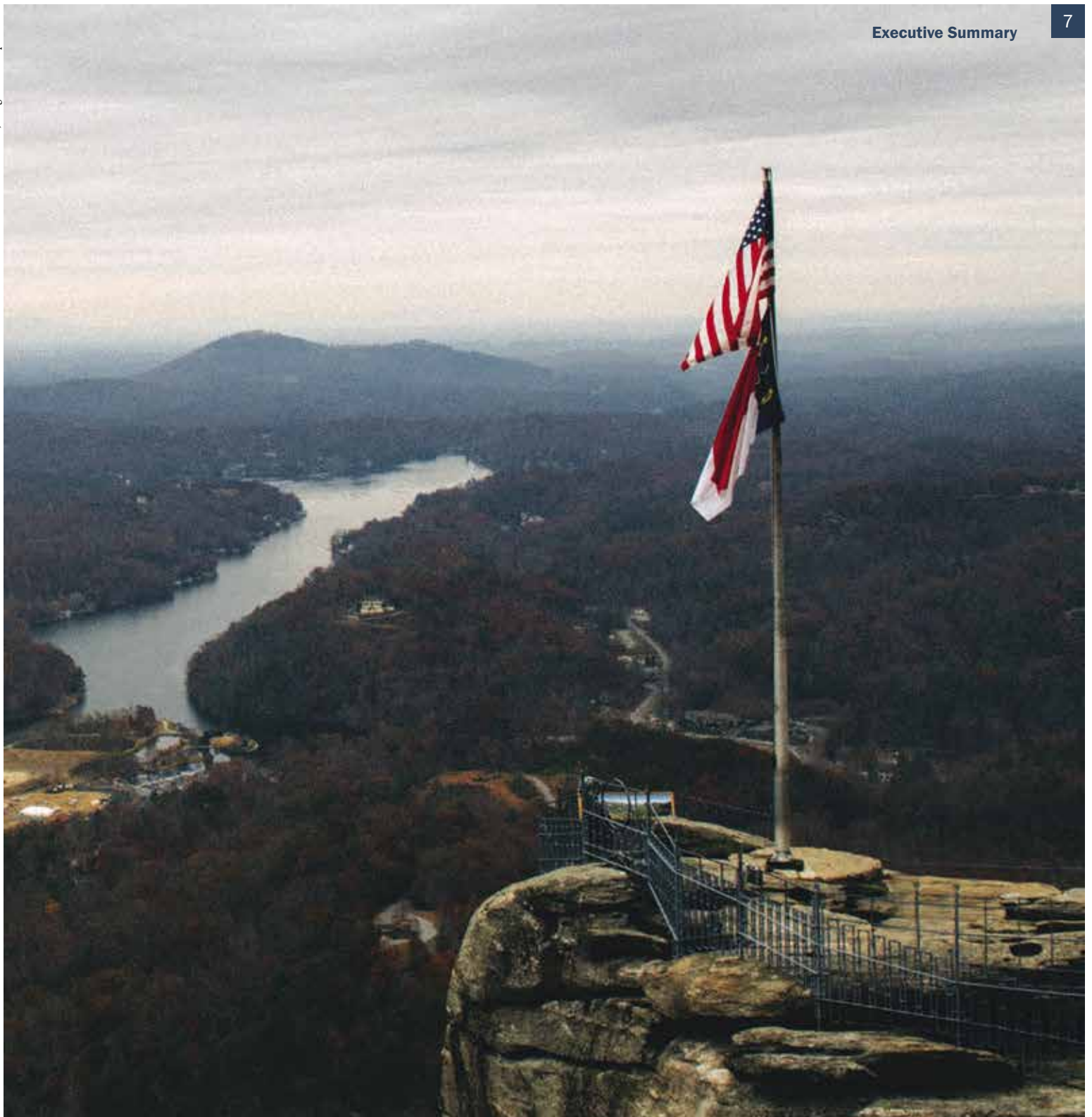
Travel (and tourism) are difficult to measure.

Travel makes use of a wide range of goods and services. Some, like theme parks, airlines, or souvenir shops, are—for the most part—closely related to tourism and travel. In other cases, however, discerning travel impacts from local benefits can be difficult. How does one, for example, determine the travel impacts of gasoline or fast-food sales? What percentage of the local workforce can be attributed to the spending of travelers?

To determine these impacts, most states and communities rely on estimates derived from sophisticated economic models. In most cases, these statistics are calculated by consultants who specialize in the economics of travel. Yet, even among experts, there is no consensus on how to measure travel impacts. Consultants, states, and communities use different and often proprietary models. As a result, there is little consistency in tourism statistics across the region.

Appalachia, and the travelling public, have never been more diverse. Appalachian communities should embrace this change.

The United Nations recently helped create a global standard for measuring tourism impacts, the Tourism Satellite Account. This methodology, if applied correctly, has the potential to create a reliable and uniform system for measuring tourism benefits. States and communities across Appalachia should adopt this standard for evaluating their tourism and travel industries.



Public lands are the foundation for Appalachian tourism. Stewardship of these areas is vital to this industry.

Travel is a major industry across the Region, but it occurs at different levels, in different places, with different impacts.

Travel generates about \$60 billion in direct sales across the Appalachian Region and employs about 577,000 people. As such, it is one of the Region's largest industries. Yet, while its economic contributions are significant, they are not evenly distributed. Half of the region's travel impacts, in terms of sales and employment, takes place in less than 10% of the Region's 420 counties. Most of this activity takes place in Appalachia's large urban centers, like Pittsburgh and Birmingham. A handful of smaller communities, such as those in the Great Smoky Mountains or the Poconos, also have high level of activity.

Most Appalachian counties, however, experience more modest levels of tourism. Yet, while these communities may not see the direct impacts of tourism seen in high-level areas, they may experience proportionately higher indirect benefits. Tourism, even at modest levels, can help smaller communities create important jobs and small business opportunities. They also help these areas develop and maintain important amenities, such as dining, lodging, and recreational venues. These, in turn, improve the quality of life for citizens and help attract and maintain new residents and employers.

The travel industry is in the midst of a massive and unprecedented change. Communities, and their leaders, must adapt to these changes or risk getting left behind.

The way people travel has changed fundamentally in just two decades. Smartphones and apps now guide travelers to destinations and post reviews of local venues. Shared economy services like Uber and Airbnb provide important services while disrupting long-established industries. Emerging technologies like electric vehicles and self-driving cars promise even more changes in the next decade.

Communities that wish to remain competitive in this environment must enter the marketplace with necessary training and infrastructure. Local tourism workers, tourism officials, and other local leaders must understand social media and use it responsibly. Communities must also invest in tourism agencies and infrastructure—including affordable and accessible broadband.

Appalachia, and the travelling public, have never been more diverse. Appalachian communities should embrace this change.

While traveling has changed, so have travelers. Today, communities can expect to see a wide range of visitors reflecting the increasingly diverse nature of American



Rhonda McCoy / Unsplash.com

households. It is vital that communities maintain a welcoming environment for all visitors, as bad experiences, given current social media trends, can have immediate consequences and deter visits from all types of people.

Increased training can help with these efforts. Communities should also exercise caution with how they reflect past events and old views. Some sites and artifacts may require new interpretations that reflect modern views. Divisive or derogatory imagery and signage should be discouraged.

Many states are now creating special tourism assistance programs for rural areas. The programs offer sustained assistance, often lasting a year or more, and are designed to both give assistance and build local capacity.

The tourism and travel workforce should also reflect this diversity. Employers should promote diversity in the industry workforce, particularly in leadership positions.

Public lands are the foundation for Appalachian tourism. Stewardship of these areas is vital to this industry.

Outdoor recreation is the leading attraction for the Appalachian Region. A large portion of this activity takes place on public lands. Eighty percent of the communities surveyed reported having public lands that draw visitors. These include national parks and forests, state parks and forests, recreation areas, local parks, and lakes, rivers, and streams.

Visitors to Appalachia cite “natural beauty” as their favorite attraction and “viewing local scenery” as their favorite activity. Communities should take steps to help preserve and maintain their natural assets. These steps could include protecting local viewsheds, encouraging conservation efforts, and promoting litter control.

Today’s traveler craves authenticity.

Travelers today both desire and demand authentic experiences. They want authentic local food and beverages, lodgings with local character, stores that sell local goods, and destinations that reflect local culture, arts, heritage, and traditions. Appalachia, fortunately, is blessed not only with natural amenities, but with a rich and diverse cultural landscape. Local tourism leaders should encourage the development and marketing of these assets, including local arts, music venues, and heritage sites. They should also assist local dining establishments with entrepreneurial assistance and encourage training programs in the culinary arts, brewing, and viticulture.

River cruising is growing in popularity in areas around the world except Appalachia.

Appalachia boasts two of the world’s great river systems—the Ohio and the Tennessee. These rivers have a rich cultural and natural history and serve communities with extensive tourism potential. Yet, while European communities worry about a possible excess of river cruise vessels, Appalachian rivers are almost devoid of these vessels.

One main reason for this is the Passenger Vessel Services Act. This legislation, created in 1886 during the Cleveland administration, was designed to protect river travel in the late nineteenth century. It requires, for example, that river passenger service must be conducted on American-made vessels staffed by American crews. While this legislation may have been well-suited for travelers a century ago, it clearly did not consider the needs of the modern global river cruise industry. Current river cruise operators rely heavily on standardized vessels and experienced crews, both of which are often sourced overseas. Leaders and officials at all levels of governments should revisit this legislation to better accommodate modern river tourism.

Rural communities benefit from sustained, hands-on technical assistance.

Many smaller communities and tourism agencies lack the capacity to compete in today’s complex and rapidly changing tourism industry. They often benefit from assistance, particularly in areas like branding, marketing, and planning. Training and help in these areas, however, is often expensive and may be geared towards urban areas. Workshops and conference sessions can be helpful, but they may lack the depth needed in rural areas.

Many states are now creating special tourism assistance programs for rural areas. The programs offer sustained assistance, often lasting a year or more, and are designed to both give assistance and build local capacity. Colorado's CRAFT program stands out and could serve as a model for Appalachian states.

Communities should make authentic experiences the center of their development efforts. To do so, they must recognize and leverage their local tourism assets.

The same approach also works well for entrepreneurship. Programs like Enterprise Facilitation, which pair new entrepreneurs with experienced mentors and “coaches,” have proven successful in helping grow small businesses in rural areas.

Substance abuse disorders are a serious issue in some areas, but best practices and innovative services can help sustain both tourism resources and the workforce.

Addiction and substance abuse are problems in many parts of Appalachia. These problems are particularly acute in some tourism sectors, particularly the restaurant industry. Addiction problems can harm a community's image, divert resources from needed areas, and destabilize small businesses.

Communities have responded to these issues in several ways. Improved code enforcement and law enforcement can help with immediate problems and help maintain a safe environment for visitors. Industry-specific recovery programs have also proven effective in helping people in recovery return to the workforce.

Recommendations

This report makes the following recommendations for Appalachian communities engaged in tourism development:

- Tourism activities are unevenly distributed across

Appalachia. Most tourism occurs in a relatively small number of counties, even though many more could enjoy its benefits. Regional stakeholders and agencies should work to redefine tourism and create a new tourism narrative for Appalachia that stresses both direct and indirect benefits.

- Many public officials do not fully understand tourism—its costs, benefits, practices, and limitations. Agencies should develop learning opportunities for local officials throughout the Region, including one-day workshops.
- Many small, rural Appalachian communities lack the capacity and resources to create effective tourism and tourism marketing plans. Agencies should create and implement hands-on community training programs that include peer mentoring, similar to Colorado's CRAFT program.
- Some communities in Appalachia may not be prepared to accommodate diverse visitors. Communities should conduct diversity training for tourism workers and officials and discourage language and signage that could potentially be divisive. Industry officials should encourage diversity in the workforce.
- Entry-level and front-line tourism workers sometimes lack hospitality training or effective knowledge of local destinations and resources. Communities across Appalachia should create local ambassador programs similar to the Jamestown Ambassador Program in Jamestown, New York.
- The Passenger Vessel Services Act is an 1886 law that may unduly and unnecessarily restrict river tourism in Appalachia. Government officials should revisit the Passenger Vessel Services Act, and potentially amend or revise it to better accommodate modern river passenger travel and tourism.
- Many small, rural communities lack the capacity to adequately enforce local building codes, zoning, and land-use regulations. This leads to a degraded built environment while also contributing to public nuisances, crime perception, and poor aesthetics. These issues, in turn, negatively impact tourism development. Communities in rural areas should invest in shared code enforcement services.

- Many Appalachian communities lack effective planning or land use controls. When plans do exist, they are rarely well integrated with tourism plans. Communities interested in developing tourism should integrate tourism considerations in their comprehensive community planning process. Community planning staff should play a role in developing tourism plans.
- The most important characteristic sought by modern tourists is authenticity. Communities should make authentic experiences the center of their development efforts. To do so, they must recognize and leverage their local tourism assets.
- While all states in Appalachia report tourism statistics, they use often use different approaches, report different measurements, and provide varying levels of access and transparency. This makes it difficult to access information and make valid comparisons across the Region. States should therefore consider the Tourism Satellite Account standard and permit easy and open access to tourism reports.



1 Introduction

As Appalachia moves into the twenty-first century, the Region is embarking on a new chapter in its history, spurred on by a diverse population and an equally diverse economy. Tourism and travel, which have long been elements of the Region's life, are poised to become integral parts of this new economy. However, as Appalachian communities pursue various tourism strategies, they are confronted with a rapidly changing and highly competitive industry, and their ability to adapt to this ever-evolving landscape will be critical to their future success.


To fully understand travel and tourism, one must travel. This statement lies at the heart of this research project.

The travel industry is currently undergoing a period of significant change. Changing tastes, emerging markets, new technologies, and the rise of social media have all converged to rapidly and radically change travel practices. In less than two decades, companies like Uber, Yelp, and Airbnb have risen from obscurity to the mainstream, disrupting tourism worldwide. These changes pose challenges for many destinations—but they also create opportunities.

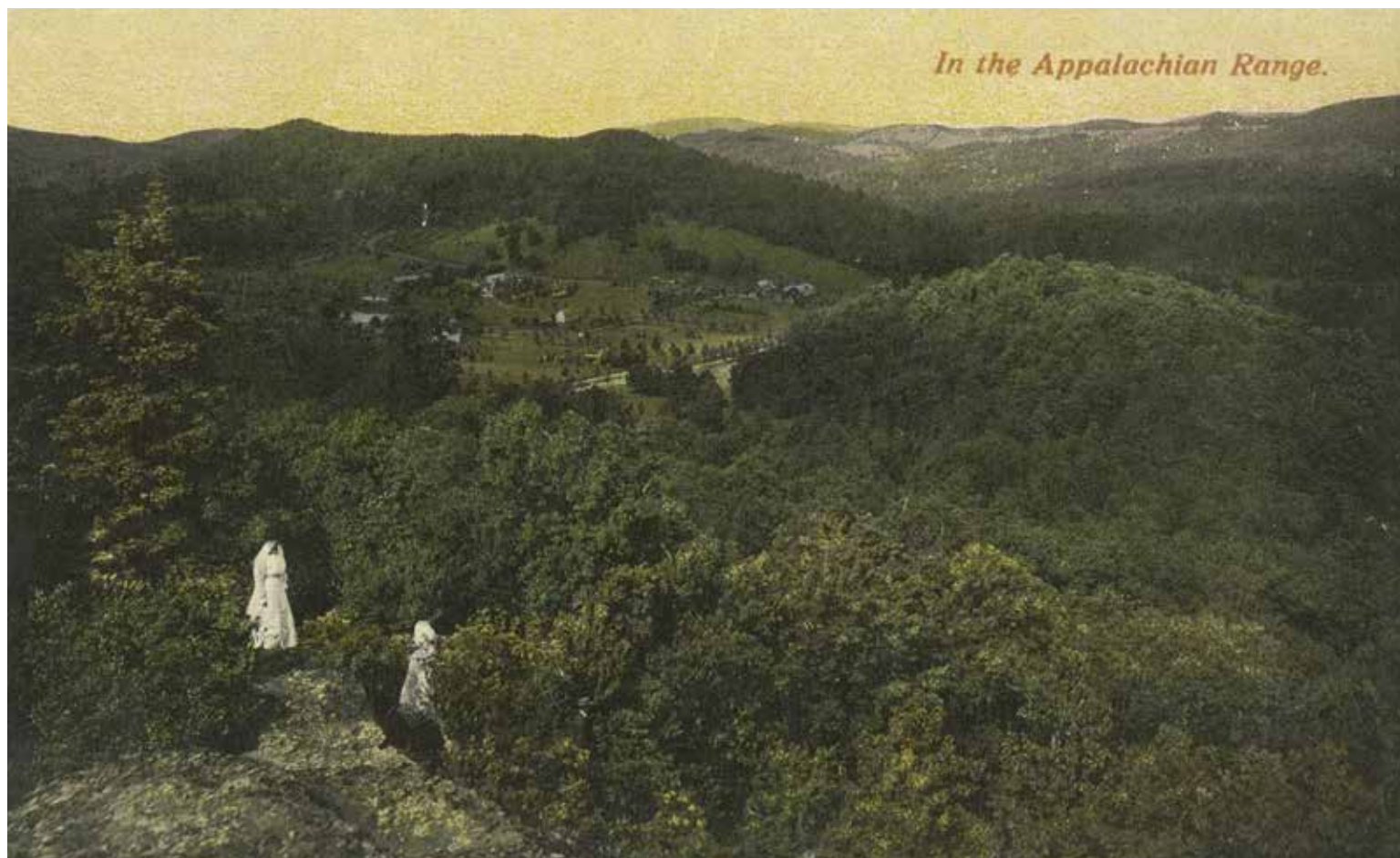
Many communities throughout Appalachia are successfully responding to these challenges and building thriving tourism industries. At the same time, some communities may be struggling to promote their local attractions and provide basic services to visitors. Others, meanwhile, may be somewhere in between: enjoying some level of success, while at the same time finding it difficult to take their community to the next level, to that of a “mature destination.”

This study examines the state of tourism across the Appalachian Region. It evaluates both the opportunities for tourism in the Region, as well as the barriers and challenges communities may face. In particular, the study looks at the following range of questions:

- What common barriers (i.e., access to capital, perceptions of the local area, skills deficits, etc.) do communities and entrepreneurs face in their tourism development efforts?
- What resources and strategies can they utilize to overcome these barriers?
- What replicable best practices are being employed across the Region?
- What innovative new approaches are communities using to build their tourism sectors?
- How do successful businesses and communities leverage—and build on—local assets?



The research team and the Appalachian Regional Commission hope to accomplish several important goals. First and foremost, this study shows the current state of tourism across the region.



f1.1

“In the Appalachian Range.” Visitor postcard from Maryville, Tennessee, circa 1912.

Source: University of Tennessee Libraries Special Collections.

- What role do investments, including those by ARC, play in communities with successful tourism sectors?
- What leadership qualities are most important to local success stories?
- What emerging trends and markets hold the most potential for Appalachian entrepreneurs and communities?
- How are Appalachian communities and entrepreneurs using social media and digital technologies to promote their tourism development efforts?
- How can success in tourism be measured and evaluated?

By asking these questions, the research team and ARC hope to accomplish several important goals. First and foremost,

this study shows the current state of tourism across the region. Secondly, it provides community members, local leaders, and public officials with practical and proven strategies to improve and increase tourism. Lastly, it offers advice to ARC on how to measure tourism impacts and suggests areas where tourism investments can yield the best returns.

Research Approach

To fully understand travel and tourism, one must travel.

This statement lies at the heart of this research project, which has been informed by thousands of miles of travel, a dozen site visits, and engagement with hundreds of visitors and tourism professionals.

The research team appreciates the challenges that come along with conducting research in small communities with

small sample sizes, where data-intensive approaches may not always be appropriate. As such, the research team utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative techniques. For both of these aspects, the team drew upon a number of engagement tools and resources.

A Stakeholder Survey

From the outset, the research team knew it would be essential to tap into the knowledge and experiences of tourism practitioners across the Region. However, it was also understood that the nature and experiences of these stakeholders would vary considerably. While larger and more established communities might have tourism directors and support staff, other communities rely on volunteers and staff with multiple job roles. The research team also recognized the important role local elected officials play in tourism development.

With these considerations in mind, the stakeholder survey was designed to solicit input from a wide range of stakeholders. The survey was constructed and compiled using Qualtrics, a web-based survey research service, and was administered primarily as an online instrument. A print version of the survey was also available upon request.¹

The surveys were distributed via web link through multiple channels. They were emailed by state tourism directors, state ARC program managers, members of this project's Advisory Group, and various other tourism and economic development professionals. In addition, using a list developed by the research team, staff at the University of Tennessee distributed the survey link to local officials throughout the Region. The list included local elected officials, local economic development directors, local tourism directors, and other stakeholders.

Survey questions covered a wide range of topics, including local challenges, local assets, and social media use. The survey also included questions about the stakeholders themselves, including job title, demographics, and work experience. In addition to the standard radio button and checkbox questions, the survey also included open-ended questions related to local assets and needs, as well as opportunities for general comments.

¹ As part of the survey, participants were asked to select their state and work county from a pair of drop-down menus. During survey construction, Morgan County was inadvertently left off the list of West Virginia counties. The project team regrets the omission.

Questions covered a variety of topics, including travel preferences, digital media use, visitor perceptions, and regional identity.

The survey was launched in late June 2018 and remained open through October 2018. Over 650 stakeholders participated in the survey, with respondents from each of ARC's 13 states. Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia had the highest number of participants, with Maryland, Mississippi, and South Carolina having the lowest. Small, rural communities were well-represented.

A number of factors probably explain the lower participation levels of some states. First, many of these states have fewer ARC counties. Of the 420 counties in the Appalachian Region, for example, only three are located in Maryland, and just six in South Carolina. For other states, such as Mississippi and New York, potentially low levels of "Appalachian identity" may have contributed to the lower participation levels. In other cases, local capacity or cultural barriers may have also played a role; some small and rural counties, for example, lack dedicated tourism staff.

Overall, response to the survey was very positive. Survey comments from participants included the following:

"Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns/thoughts"

"Thank you for your efforts to help improve this sector of society and region of the country!"

"Thank you for caring!"

WELCOME TO THE BEAUTIFUL AND HISTORIC APPALACHIAN REGION!

WHETHER YOU ARE A FIRST-TIME VISITOR OR A FREQUENT TOURIST IN THE REGION, WE NEED YOUR HELP!



The University of Tennessee is working with the Appalachian Regional Commission and communities across our thirteen-state region to better understand and improve tourism in the area. The survey will only take a few minutes and will help us improve visitor experiences across the region. Information from the survey will also help create jobs and opportunities in Appalachian communities. Your travel preferences, experiences, and opinions are important to this research!

JUST SCAN THE QR CODE ON THIS CARD OR GO TO WWW.APPALACHIASURVEY.COM TO ACCESS THE SURVEY.

You can also enter a drawing for one of five fabulous gift boxes from artisans and organizations across the region!

These boxes include assortments from:

- The Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Harpers Ferry, WV
- Heartwood Artisan Gateway, Abingdon, VA
- The Kentucky Artisan Center, Berea, KY
- Made in Tennessee, Tennessee Department of Tourism
- Tamarack, the Best of West Virginia, Beckley, WV

Plus, learn more about the Appalachian Region with our games on the back of the card!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND HAVE A SAFE TRIP!

You do not have to take the survey to participate in the drawing. If you would like to enter the drawing without taking the survey, send your name and contact information to Appalachian Survey Drawing, P.O. Box 1387, Knoxville, TN 37902. Entries must be received by September 30th, 2018.



Visitor Survey

By definition, tourism is a transactional activity. While the stakeholder survey provided extensive information from the providers' perspectives, it told us little about the customers' experiences, preferences, and concerns. As such, it was necessary that the research team also conduct a survey for visitors to the Appalachian Region.

There are special challenges related to surveying people who are on vacation. They are, by definition, a transient population focused largely on recreation and relaxation. Naturally, then, they may not be inclined to respond to long or tedious inquiries. Therefore, any survey focused on visitors should aim to be quick, entertaining, and rewarding.

The visitor survey was designed with these goals in mind. First, the instrument was designed to be fast, interactive, and easily accessible. While the survey could be taken on the internet using a computer, or even on paper (upon request), it could also be answered using a smartphone. Questions were designed to be engaging, with interactive tools utilized throughout, such as a question involving a heat map. Open-ended responses were kept to a minimum, and the anticipated response time for the thirty-question survey was less than seven minutes.

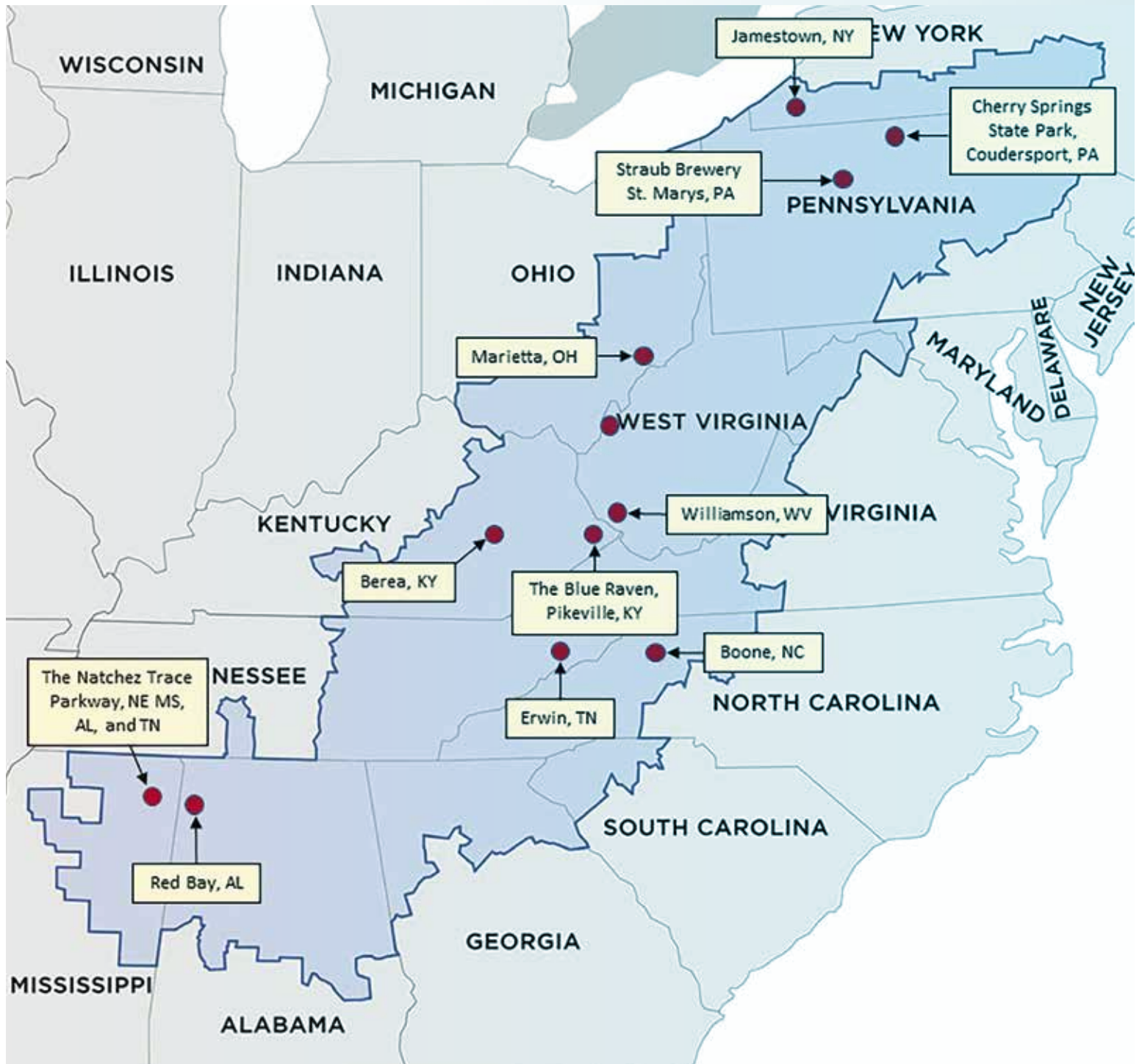
Like the stakeholder survey, the visitor survey was constructed and compiled using Qualtrics. Questions covered a variety of topics, including travel preferences, digital media use, visitor perceptions, and regional identity.

Incentives were offered to encourage participation. Five gift baskets were awarded to participants through a random, voluntary drawing. These baskets, each valued at approximately \$200, were provided by Tennessee Tourism, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Kentucky Artisan Center, Tamarack: The Best of West Virginia, and the Heartwood Artisan Center in Virginia. Almost 60% of participants elected to participate in this drawing.

Surveys were distributed using rack cards (see Figure 1.2). The cards were designed to fit into standard tourism information kiosks. The colorful cards included information about the survey, a survey link, and a survey QR code. Card backs featured Appalachian trivia games to help inform and engage potential participants.

f1.2

Visitor Survey Rack Card

f1.3 Map showing project case studies.

Visitor survey cards were distributed by state tourism agencies, advisory board members, and other channels. Distribution locations included state and local welcome centers, as well as various tourism venues throughout the Region. The survey was open from July 2018 through October 2018. During this four-month period, 582 visitors participated in the survey. Participants came from 28 states and one foreign country.

Case Studies and Site Visits

In order to better understand conditions across the Region, the research team undertook 12 case studies. These site visits were selected based on a number of criteria, including the following:

- Survey results
- Literature review
- Regional and topical diversity
- Replicability and applicability
- Ability to engage readers
- Project logistics

In short, the team sought case studies that were relevant, asset-based, and sustainable. Case studies include the following sites and communities:



f1.4

Bruce Decker, a member of the research team, talks with a local tourism official during a site visit in Williamson, West Virginia.

Tourism Communities Case Studies

- Berea, KY
- Boone, NC
- Erwin, TN
- Jamestown, NY
- Marietta, OH
- Red Bay, AL
- Williamson, WV

Tourism Venues and Establishments Case Studies

- The Blue Raven, Pikeville, KY
- Cherry Springs State Park, Potter County, PA
- Mothman Festival, Pt. Pleasant, WV
- Natchez Trace Parkway, MS, AL, and TN
- Straub Brewery, St. Marys, PA

Team members conducted a site visit to each case study location. These case studies, which are used to both illustrate and reinforce research findings, are found throughout the report. During site visits, team members met with local tourism stakeholders, including elected officials, other public officials, tourism directors and staff, and business owners.² Researchers also held informal conversations with local visitors and workers on the “front lines” of the tourism industry, such as hotel desk clerks, servers, and shop owners. Researchers also toured local venues, walked local streets, and photographed notable sites.

Participant Confidentiality

The research team believed that Appalachian residents should have a meaningful voice in this research project. As such, comments expressed by community members are used throughout the report in order to provide context and illustrate findings. These comments were collected from the project’s surveys, as well as during site visit discussions.

² “Other public officials” include city managers, economic development staff, development district staff, etc.



In order to encourage open and honest participation, the research team assured anonymity to survey respondents and case study participants. As a result, most comments are anonymous; speakers, when named, have given their expressed consent to be identified.

A Note About Project Statistics

As noted previously, small places generate small numbers. Many of the communities featured in this study have small populations, attract modest numbers of visitors, and claim few, if any, tourism workers. Survey numbers from these areas—even taken collectively—may be considerably smaller than those collected in similar studies of larger, more urban areas. While certainly sufficient to provide insights and initiate discussions, the research team did not attempt to draw correlations or make claims of statistical significance.

This report also makes use of secondary data. These data sets, such as economic impact and employment figures, are compiled by state agencies, private research consultants, and other entities. In viewing these figures, it is important

to keep a few things in mind. First, these numbers often measure travel impacts—not impacts related to tourism. While tourism is a part of travel, this broad category also includes other activities, such as business travel, relocation, and trips related to family or health needs. While people often travel for different reasons, they rely on many of the same services; as such, all travel is typically viewed as a single category, encompassing travel related to tourism in addition to these other types of travel.

This research undertaking benefitted from the guidance of an advisory group composed of tourism professionals from several states throughout the Region.

It should also be noted that states and agencies are not consistent in the ways they collect, analyze, and present travel data. States and agencies—and their consultants—often employ different tools and methodologies to create these data sets. In some cases, these tools are proprietary and protected. It is also not uncommon for states to report different types of data and variables, and to do so in different years. The project team strived to collect the most recent and most consistent data available, but the reader should be aware of these issues, particularly when attempts at comparison are made. Stemming from this issue is the research team’s recommendation for better and more standardized reporting, which will be discussed later in this report.

While the research team found much to praise about tourism in Appalachia, they also identified a number of important issues that need to be addressed.

Project Advisory Group

This research undertaking benefitted from the guidance of an advisory group composed of tourism professionals from several states throughout the Region. The group reviewed project materials, discussed research findings, and helped with case study selections. Members of this group were as follows:

- **Bill Atkinson**
ARC Program Manager for Maryland
- **Angie Chandler**
Executive Director of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
- **Suzanne Dixon**
President and CEO of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy
- **Dave Jones**
East TN Division Manager, Tennessee Dept. of Tourism
- **Jeff Lusk**
Executive Director, Hatfield-McCoy Trails
- **Abbi Peters**
Managing Director of PA Wilds
- **Tami Reist**
President and CEO of the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association
- **Kevin Triplett**
Commissioner of Tennessee Dept. of Tourist Development

A Final Thought

While the research team found much to praise about tourism in Appalachia, they also identified important issues that need to be addressed. It is hoped that by discussing these challenges, communities will gain an awareness of the various issues potentially holding back the development of their tourism sectors—and learn ways to overcome them.



It is hoped that by discussing challenges, communities will gain an awareness of the various issues potentially holding back the development of their tourism sectors—and learn ways to overcome them.

2 A Brief History of Appalachian Tourism

Though agriculture may be the oldest industry in Appalachia, tourism isn't very far behind. Visitors began traveling to the Region in the colonial era. As is the case today, many were drawn to the area's abundant scenic and natural resources. Among the earliest attractions were natural mineral springs thought to have therapeutic value, which became one of the Region's first destination attractions. Among the most popular of these were the warm water pools found in aptly named Bath County, Virginia. These springs attracted visitors as early as 1750, and there was a full-fledged resort by 1800. Thomas Jefferson spent three weeks at these pools in 1818 seeking relief from rheumatism. The former U.S. president proclaimed the springs to be "of the first merit," and he also visited other local sites, such as "the rock on the high mountain" and "the falling spring."³

Western expansion, rising incomes, and improved transportation led to a growth in regional tourism in the nineteenth century. Communities like Blowing Rock, North Carolina, were well-established tourism centers by the 1850s and grew rapidly after the Civil War. Postbellum railroad expansion and the rise of an industrial middle class led to the creation of large resorts across Appalachia in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many of these sites, such as the Greenbrier (West Virginia), Homestead (Virginia), and Grove Park Inn (North Carolina), are still considered some of the Region's finest destinations.⁴

³ J.T. McAllister, *Historical Sketches of Virginia Hot Springs, Warm Sulphur Springs, and Bath County Virginia*, (J.T. McAllister, 1908), 6-7; Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson Randolph, August 7, 1818 and August 14, 1818, quoted in the *Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia* (Thomas Jefferson Foundation: <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/warm-springs-va>).



The Ladies Bath House in Warm Springs, Virginia was built in 1836 to supplement the original bath house constructed in 1761. Note the steam rising from the opening in the round building. Source: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Warm Springs and West Warm Springs Historic District, no date.

While government railroad subsidies helped fuel tourism growth, other policy changes also helped attract visitors. Rapid urbanization and industrialization sparked increased interest in the preservation of important natural areas and their recreational use. In 1872, Congress created the nation's first national park at Yellowstone in Wyoming. A second national park was later established at Yosemite in California.⁵

Encouraged by these efforts, conservation advocates in the East began efforts to protect Appalachian resources. In 1899,

⁴ Benita J. Howell, "Tourism," *The Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 613-614.

⁵ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (New York: Taylor Trade Publishing), 35-42, 52-56.



Global events and disruptive technologies radically changed tourism in the early twentieth century.



f2.2

Travelers dine in an East Tennessee hotel, circa 1920.

Source: Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.



f2.3

Civil war veterans visiting Chickamauga, Georgia, circa 1892. Source: *Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park: Historic Resource Study*.



f2.4

Highway travel scene from the 1930s. Source, University of Tennessee Special Collections.

the Appalachian National Park Association was formed and began to lobby Congress for the acquisition of forest reserves. They later joined forces with the Appalachian Mountain Club and the American Forestry Association to press for the acquisition of public lands.⁶

These efforts resulted in the passage of the Weeks Act in 1911. This legislation, officially known as the Appalachian-White Mountains Forest Reservation Bill, authorized the government's acquisition of vast tracts of eastern wilderness. These areas became the basis for the Appalachian Region's network of national forests, including Pisgah National Forest (1916), George Washington National Forest (1917), Cherokee National Forest (1920), and Allegheny National Forest (1923).⁷

Around the same time, the federal government also began the acquisition of important historic sites. Inspired by large Civil War reunions and the influence of veteran voters, the government began efforts to acquire and preserve historic battle sites. During the 1890s, the government acquired four Civil War battlefields, including the Chickamauga and Chattanooga sites, and preserved them for public use.⁸

Global events and disruptive technologies radically changed tourism in the early twentieth century. Many wealthy travelers stopped going on grand tours of Europe because of World War I, instead opting to take long auto tours of the United States. As auto travel became more acceptable, they were soon joined by a growing middle-class population. Families across the country were soon traveling the nation's nascent highways, sleeping in newfound "motor courts," and exploring the natural and historical wonders of America.⁹

Middle-class drivers soon formed "auto clubs," which began advocating for better highways and improved park systems. Federal and state governments soon responded

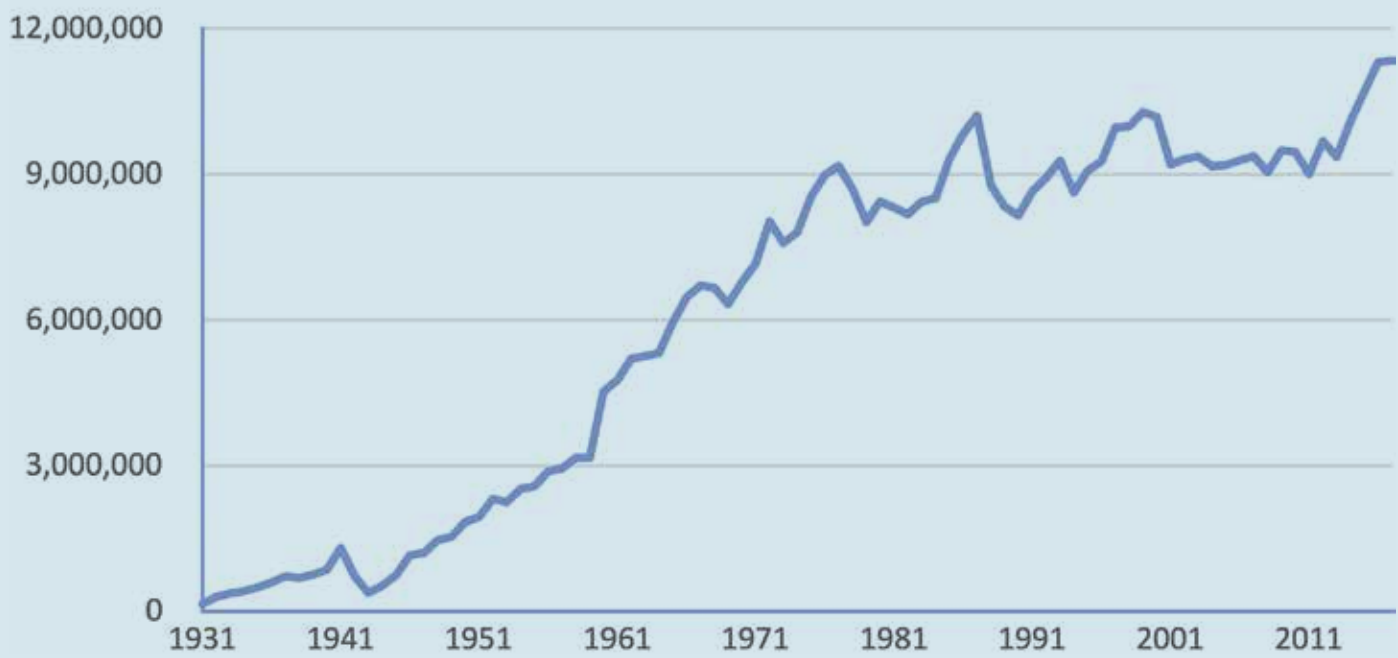
⁶ Carl Dennis Smith, "The Appalachian National Park Movement, 1885-1901," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 38-65; Dan Pierce, "The Great Smoky Mountains National Park," *The Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 647-648.

⁷ Forest History Society, "The Weeks Act," <https://foresthistor.org/research-explore/us-forest-service-history/policy-and-law/the-weeks-act/>.

⁸ Jill K. Hanson and Robert W. Blythe, *Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park: Historic Resource Study* (National Park Service: 1999), 30-35.

⁹ John A Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

f2.5 Annual visitors to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1931–2015



The number of visitors to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park increased dramatically following World War II.

Source: National Park Service

with plans for improved highways and scenic roadways. The federal response to the Great Depression accelerated these efforts. New Deal programs, such as the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps, employed thousands in conservation and public works programs. These agencies played a major role in the creation of state and national parks. While they created much-needed jobs, they also provided vital opportunities for families in need of affordable recreation.

The most significant example of this trend came with the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (referred to colloquially as the Smokies), in the 1930s. The park had long been a goal for many in the Region. It was hailed by conservationists, outdoor enthusiasts, and elected officials as a way to preserve vital wilderness resources while also creating economic opportunities in one of the nation's poorest areas. Congress authorized creation of the park in the 1920s but refused to authorize funds for land acquisition. Funds for park lands were instead raised from donations,

including \$5 million from John D. Rockefeller. New Deal agencies played a major role in the construction of the park, which wasn't formally dedicated until 1940. The Smokies soon became the nation's most popular national park, as well as an economic engine for surrounding communities. Its success soon led to the creation of other sites across the Region and corresponding growth in nearby communities.¹⁰

New Deal agencies also transformed the nature of auto travel with the creation of scenic parkways. Three such roadways were constructed in the Region during the 1930s: the Blue Ridge Parkway, Skyline Drive, and the Natchez Trace Parkway. These roadways, as well as many others constructed during the era, turned driving into a form of recreation. In doing so, they essentially transformed the journey into the destination.¹¹

¹⁰ Dan Pierce, *Ibid.*

¹¹ National Park Service, "Parkways," <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/transportation/parkways.htm>.

f2.6

In addition to construction and conservation projects, New Deal agencies also created guidebooks and promotional materials. This poster promoting Pennsylvania was created by the Works Progress Administration.

Source: Library of Congress.



f2.7

Theme parks became popular attractions in the 1960s and 1970s. Visitors to North Carolina's Land of Oz could follow the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City.

Source: Land of Oz Postcard Circa 1970, Collection of the Author.



f2.8

Venues like Gatlinburg's Hillbilly Village often promoted negative Appalachian stereotypes. Source: University of Tennessee Special Collections.

Post-war prosperity, baby boom families, and increased auto travel led to explosive growth in tourism in the 1950s and 1960s. Gateway communities located near major destinations grew rapidly, with attractions becoming increasingly diverse. By the early 1970s visitors could find the "Land of Oz" on Grandfather Mountain in North Carolina, visit "Porpoise Island" in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, or witness West Virginia's "Mystery Hole."

This expansion fueled economic growth but also created problems related to congestion, pollution, and housing. In many communities, tourism also promoted Appalachian stereotypes. Venues like "Hillbilly Golf" and "Hillbilly Village" portrayed mountain people as lazy, barefoot drunkards. Moonshine stills, slouched hats, corncob pipes, and earthenware moonshine jugs became not just common, but expected by visitors.¹²

Interstate development in the 1960s and 1970s brought additional growth, but it also led to unexpected consequences. Chains and franchises came to dominate the dining and lodging landscapes, with large corporate developments squeezing out local family establishments. Meanwhile, many communities located far away from the interstates found themselves isolated and struggled to remain competitive. This was especially true in parts of Appalachia where highway improvements lagged behind the rest of the nation.¹³

Ironically, while commercialization and expansion began to dominate some parts of the Region's tourism sector, other parts found growth in promoting outdoor activities in quiet, isolated areas. Additionally, increased environmental awareness and concerns about pollution led to renewed interest in outdoor recreation. Hiking, whitewater sports, rock climbing, and other outdoor pursuits surged in this era.

A particularly good example of this trend is the Appalachian Trail. First envisioned in the 1920s, the hiking trail was officially completed in 1971, when it was designated a National Scenic Trail by the federal government. The year prior, in 1970, just 10 hikers completed the trail. In 2017, nearly 1,186 hikers finished the approximately 2,200-mile trek.¹⁴

¹² Tim Hollis, *In the Land of the Smokies: Great Mountain Memories* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 62-64, 90.

¹³ Benita Howell, *Ibid*, 615.

¹⁴ Appalachian Trail Conservancy, <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/home/community/2000-milers>.

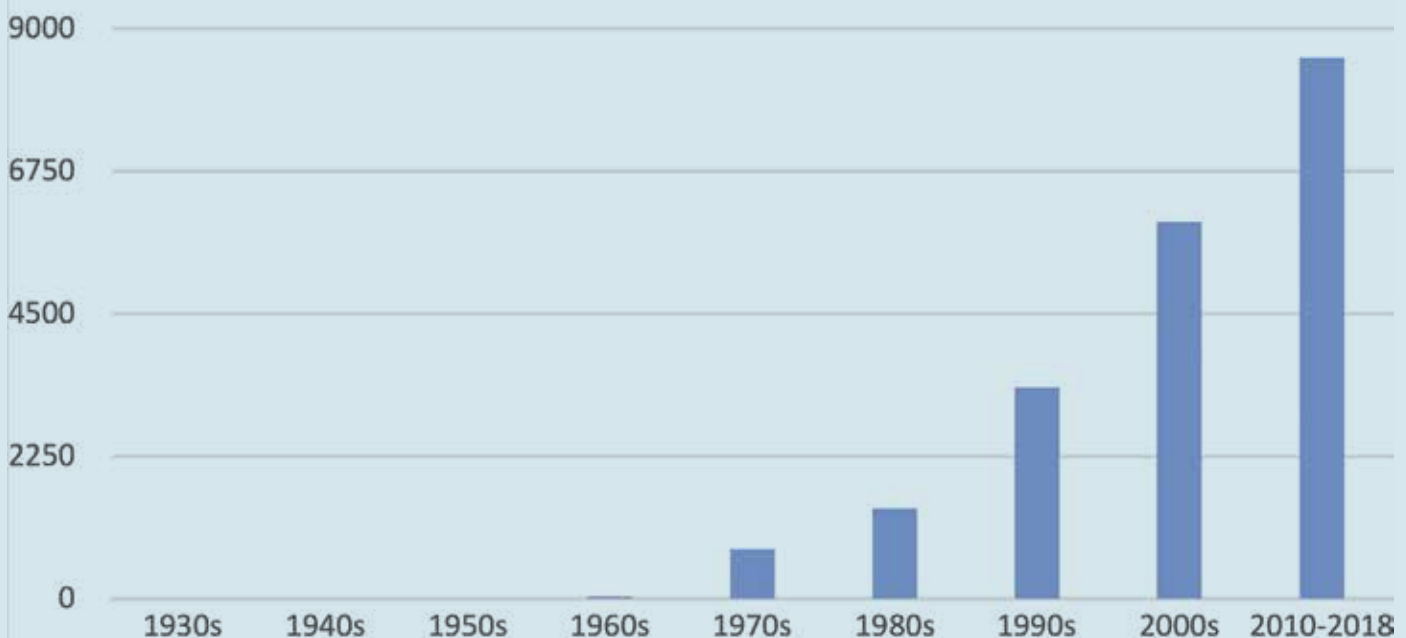
The past few decades have experienced a level of change unseen since the introduction of the Model T. The rise of the internet, social media, and smart phones have combined to fundamentally transform travel decisions and experiences. Review sites now drive consumer choices, and travel sites increase competition for visitors. Preferences are also changing, with millennials and Gen Xers preferring Airbnb to traditional hotels, Ubers to taxis, and authenticity to contrived themes.

Unchanged, however, are the core assets that draw visitors to Appalachia. The Region's natural and cultural resources continue to serve as the foundation of its tourism industry. As Appalachia moves forward to a more diversified economy in the twenty-first century, sustaining and protecting these resources will remain vital to the Region's well-being.

As Appalachia moves forward to a more diversified economy in the twenty-first century, sustaining and protecting these resources will remain vital to the Region's well-being.

f2.9

Number of hikers completing the Appalachian Trail, by decade, 1930–2018



Appalachian trail completions have soared since the 1970s. Source: Appalachian Trail Conservancy

3 Literature Review

An increasing number of communities and destinations worldwide are investing in tourism as a key driver of socio-economic progress in terms of generating tax revenue, creating jobs, and supporting infrastructure development. Tourism is also seen as a way to foster intercultural understanding, where locals and tourists alike learn to respect and appreciate one another. Naturally, then, one positive effect of tourism is that it brings people from different cultures together so that they may exist “harmoniously in a world where space, resources, and options are shrinking quickly” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2004).

One positive effect of tourism is that it brings people from different cultures together so that they may exist “harmoniously in a world where space, resources, and options are shrinking quickly.”

However, a great deal of planning and development goes into the creation of a sustainable tourism destination. Several paradigms will be discussed in this section, each of which represents a different approach to the initial shaping of a destination, as well as how these destinations interact with and impact the communities in which they’re located. Later in the chapter, additional items—such as visitor management strategies and agritourism—will be discussed.

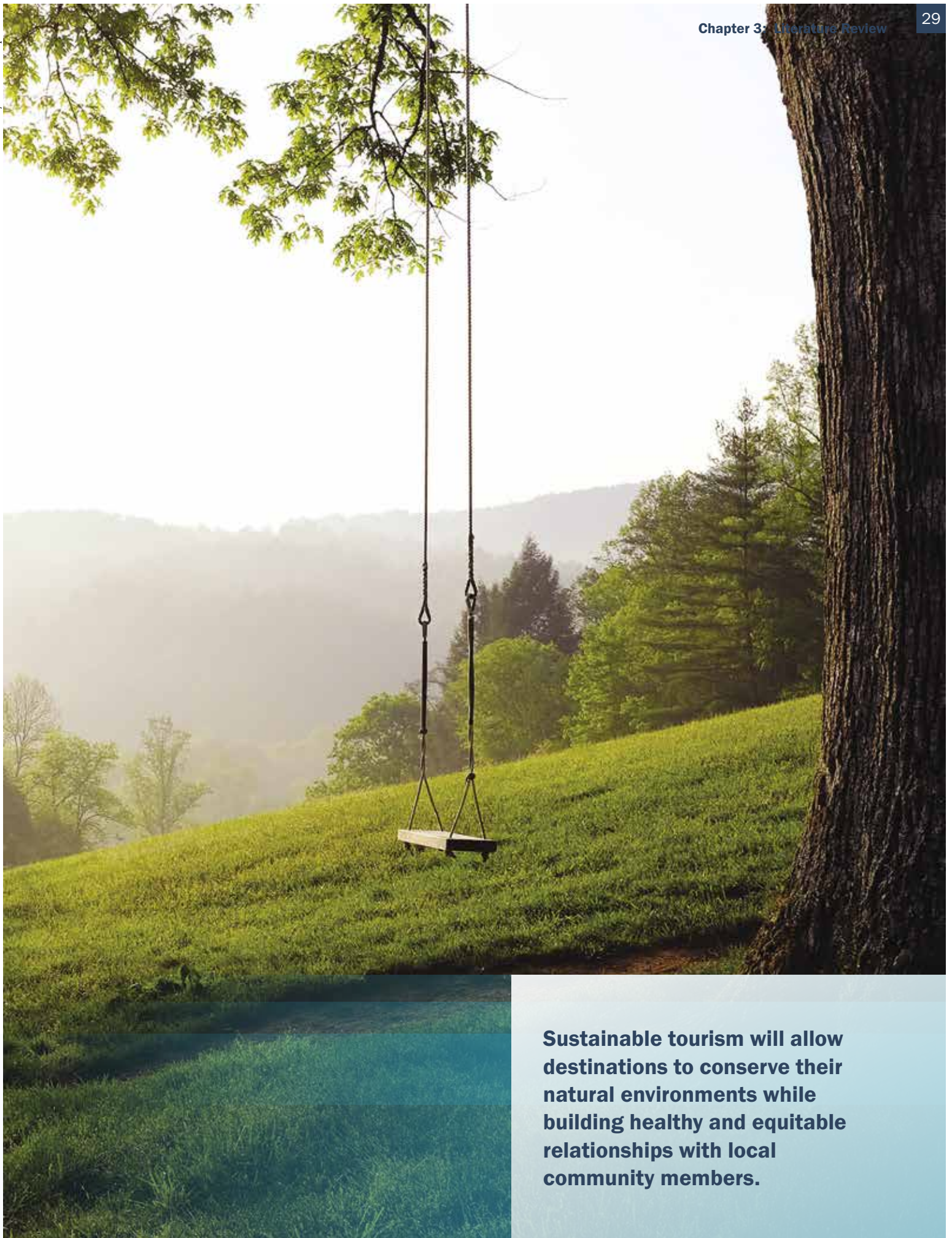
The Four Paradigms

Community-based

Tourism managed and owned by community members that promotes social, cultural, and environmental sustainability is defined as community-based tourism (CBT). As a result, this approach enables visitors to learn about the authentic experiences of a local community when visiting a destination. For instance, Simpson (2007) noted that “a community’s sense of ownership, feeling of responsibility and practical involvement in tourism has since been heralded by researchers and practitioners as central to the sustainability of tourism and of great importance to planners, managers and operators” (p. 7).

Building on this idea, community benefit tourism initiatives (CBTIs) are networks of stakeholders that focus on providing livelihoods and other benefits as a result of a local tourism sector. CBTIs do not focus on any particular aspect of the industry, but instead address the needs of the whole community. Typically, in addition to government officials providing leadership for these initiatives, the private sector also needs to be involved, including investors and developers. In fact, Simpson (2017) argued that private-sector tourism stakeholders recognize issues of sustainability for their own ventures, and as a result, they understand the importance of sustainability and stewardship for the community as a whole.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) also play a vital role in conducting research, providing funding, and increasing awareness of issues related to local tourism.



Sustainable tourism will allow destinations to conserve their natural environments while building healthy and equitable relationships with local community members.

Examples of community-based tourism within the Appalachian tourism corridor may include Asheville, North Carolina.

Pro-growth

Pro-growth tourism, also known as mass tourism, entails large numbers of people traveling to a particular destination for a specific amount of time (Weaver, 2018). Often, mass tourism is seen only for its perceived economic benefits, and not the significant physical and environmental impacts tourists may have on a particular location.

Of course, there are both positive and negative aspects of a mass tourism approach. One clear positive is that it can support large numbers of tourists. And with careful

planning, the economic gains from these tourists can be spread throughout the community, both amongst business owners and residents. However, one negative is that with a large number of tourists come significant, perhaps unwanted impacts on the local community—and local residents bear the brunt of these negative outcomes (Claver-Cortés, Molina-Azorí, & Pereira-Moliner, 2007). An example of a pro-growth paradigm includes Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

Ecotourism

In many ways, ecotourism is just the opposite of mass tourism: It involves responsible, low-impact tourism in natural areas while also conserving the local environment and supporting the well-being of local people (Fennell, 2014).



Chad Madden / Unsplash.com

The International Ecotourism Society (2019) recommends that those who wish to encourage ecotourism in their communities should do the following:

- Minimize physical, social, behavioral, and psychological impacts.
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Generate financial benefits for both local people and private industry.
- Deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.
- Design, construct, and operate low-impact facilities.
- Recognize the rights and spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous People in the community and work in partnership with them to create empowerment.

With these principles in mind, tourism destinations will be able to have lower impacts on their natural environments while also sustaining healthy, mutually beneficial relationships with members of their communities.

A large-scale example of a destination that incorporates an ecotourism paradigm is Costa Rica. Smaller local destinations can be found in Appalachia. A notable example is River Place on the Clinch, a destination in Hancock County, Tennessee developed in partnership with the Nature Conservancy.¹⁵

Sustainability

A sustainability approach to tourism entails a balanced and healthy economy that is supported by tourism-related jobs, revenues, and taxes—while also protecting and enhancing the destination's cultural, historical, natural, and built resources, for the enjoyment and well-being of both residents and visitors alike (Hunter, 1997). This approach is similar to the ecotourism paradigm; however, the sustainability approach

The question then becomes how much local residents are willing to share with tourists while maintaining some level of privacy and authenticity.

also emphasizes the cultural and historical elements and characteristics of a community.

Additionally, the sustainability approach encourages dialogue between a diverse group of community members about tourism and its economic, social, and environmental impacts (Wall, 1997).

Considerations

Various considerations must be weighed by communities when it comes to managing the development of tourism destinations. Weaver (2018) points out three: front stage and backstage activities, development standards, and government incentives.

Front Stage and Backstage

As they relate to tourism, front stage refers to all those activities that are managed to accommodate tourists, while backstage refers to all those activities related to the private, everyday lives of local residents. Ideally, there is an understanding among locals that the front stage is designated and managed so that the area meets the tourists' expectations of that particular destination. The backstage, meanwhile, is seen as an area where local residents can preserve and enjoy their own authentic culture, without perhaps being under the gaze of tourists in the area.

However, given emerging trends in tourism, many tourists want authentic cultural experiences, which necessitates to some degree that they be a part of backstage activities. However, local residents sometimes want to keep their distance from tourists, thus creating a barrier between the two groups. The question then becomes whether local residents can maintain some level of privacy and authenticity while sharing their community with tourists. Each community will have to answer this on its own—and to do so, it must consider the perspectives of a wide variety of stakeholders.

¹⁵ <https://www.tnvacation.com/local/kyles-ford-river-place-clinch>.

Development Standards

Zoning and districting regulations specify that particular areas are to be used as residential, commercial, or industrial, which can sometimes restrict tourism-related land uses and activities. For example, natural areas may be protected in order to minimize negative environmental impacts and preserve natural habitats. By doing so, the natural environment is maintained and can be sustained for future generations; and with some of these protected areas being directly related to tourism activities, thoughtful planning plays a significant role in the protection and maintenance of certain destinations. Also, by carefully regulating and managing these areas, tourists will be able to enjoy the experience all the more—because the areas they’re visiting have been effectively preserved and maintained.

Examples of agritourism may include farm stays and tours, hayrides, pick-your-own-produce, agricultural festivals, and bed-and-breakfasts.

In addition to these regulations, voluntary codes of conduct try to mitigate negative impacts of tourism and improve environmental quality. These codes have been developed by the government—with input from a wide range of stakeholders—in order to guide the behavior of organizations and individuals, while also creating an awareness of the importance of sound environmental policies and management. Additionally, codes of conduct for tourism “heighten awareness among international and domestic visitors of the importance of appropriate behavior with respect to both the natural and cultural environment they experience” (Holden, 2008).

There are also codes of conduct for host communities and tourism-related industries that help determine the role of the local population in tourism development; safeguard local cultures and traditions; educate the local population on the importance of balance between conservation and economic

development; and provide quality tourist products and experiences (Holden, 2008). A good example of this comes from Canada’s Code of Ethics for the Tourism Industry, which understands the importance of the long-term sustainability of tourism, and that the sector depends on the “...wise use and conservation of ‘our’ natural resources; the protection and enhancement of ‘our’ environments; and the preservation of ‘our’ cultural, historic and aesthetic resources” (Holden, 2008).

Government Incentives

Government incentives can be offered to individuals, companies, and organizations that adopt practices that benefit communities as a whole. In a seminal piece, Jenkins and Henry (1982) identified two types of government involvement: passive and active. Passive involvement falls under two categories: passive mandatory and supportive mandatory. Passive mandatory involvement will usually be linked with legislative provision, whereas supportive mandatory involvement arises when government does not deliberately inhibit the development of tourism. Active involvement implies not only a recognition by government of the specific needs of the tourism sector, but also of the necessity for its operational participation to attain stated objectives.

Tax breaks and capital gains are examples of government incentives. For instance, most states provide film incentives most of which come in the form of tax credits, cash rebates, and grants. These subsidies are designed to attract production companies to produce film and television projects in the state, create and maintain film industry jobs, and attract tourism to the area. These film incentives offer the potential for phenomenal growth beyond the actual filming production, as destinations have created touristic activities and tours based around the film/television shows. Many destination marketing organizations promote locations (i.e., Visit New Mexico and Visit North Carolina) where tourists can re-enact scenes or venture to filming locations.

For example, *Green Lodging News* states the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 “contains a number of tax provisions that provide significant value to lodging companies that are focused on reducing energy use through efficiency or producing renewable energy. The magnitude of funding, and the emphasis on energy efficiency and alternative energy usage, encourages renewed discussion around going green even during these challenging economic

times.” (<https://www.greenlodgingnews.com/recent-tax-incentives-encourage-another-look-sustainability/>).

Agritourism and Rural Travel

There are various definitions of agritourism, as well as many types of agriculture-related tourism. For instance, Busby and Rendle (2000) reported over 13 definitions of farm tourism/agritourism in the existing literature at that time. Similar definitions and terms exist around rural tourism and farm vacation tourism. In this report, however, agritourism is defined as “a specific type of rural tourism in which the hosting house must be integrated into an agricultural estate, inhabited by the proprietor, allowing visitors to take part in agricultural or complementary activities on the property” (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008, p. 168). Thus, examples of agritourism may include farm

stays and tours, hayrides, pick-your-own-produce, agricultural festivals, and bed-and-breakfasts (McGehee, 2007).

Numerous studies explore the motivations or rationale for the development of agritourism enterprises. The most prevalent is based on the simple principle of economic development (Busby & Rendle 2000; Miller 1993; Nickerson, Black, & McCool 2001; Weaver & Fennell 1997). McGehee et al. (2002) explored the motivations for agritourism development among small farm families in Virginia. The researchers uncovered two major themes of motivation, including (1) creating additional income and (2) fully utilizing available resources. Even small increases in sales can be a significant help to some farmers. For instance, according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, combined income from agritourism and recreational services





and direct-to consumer sales totaled US \$2.01 billion. It is challenging to accurately monitor agritourism sales over time due to the change in terminology after the 2002 census (Chase, Stewart, Schilling, Smith, & Walk, 2018).

There was some research in the United Kingdom around the motivations of agritourism, with a focus on how the practice there had its roots in social or cultural components, but then gradually became more economically driven (Busby & Rendle, 2000). Respondents to a Canadian survey on agritourism indicated their motivations included the sharing of rural experiences with outsiders, opportunities for socialization, and meeting new people (Weaver & Fennell, 1997).

Chiappe and Flora (2000) found that many people involved in sustainable agriculture were dedicated to providing fresh

and healthy produce at a reasonable price. Educational components of agritourism were another high motivator for inviting the public to farms and ranches (McGehee, 2007). Lobo et al. (1999) reached similar conclusions when examining agritourism locations in California.

There are various challenges when it comes to agritourism, including risk management and liability issues; a lack of knowledge regarding owning and operating small businesses; community members' hesitations with agritourism-related traffic; and no guarantees of economic benefits (McGehee et al., 2002). However, as mentioned previously, there are also many benefits of agritourism when the planning and development of these destinations is done effectively. In order to do so, as is the case with any tourism venture, stakeholders—including the farmers themselves—must work

together to develop an appropriate strategy for agritourism in their communities.

Diversity and Inclusion

Underrepresented populations, including people of color, people with disabilities (PWDs), and LGBTQ+, are growing markets in hospitality and tourism and make a significant economic impact on the industry. Currently, present-day United States is witnessing significant changes in demographics, with reports projecting that by 2050, 43% of the population will consist of people of color (Contrino and McGuckin 2009). Consequently, accompanying these overall demographic changes will be corresponding changes to the travel market, with each of these groups accounting for a progressively larger share of travelers as time goes on.

Focusing specifically on people with disabilities (PWDs), globally, one billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability, and this number is increasing due to an ageing population, the spread of chronic diseases, and improvements used to measure disabilities (World Health Organization, 2019). Most recently, a podcast from Skift, a travel resource center, shared that adults with disabilities in the U.S. spent \$17.3 billion a year on leisure and business travel, and 26 million adults with disabilities took 73 million trips in 2016 (Samson, 2017). Furthermore, a 2015 study by McKinsey & Company stated that the baby boomer generation commanded almost 60% of net U.S. wealth and 40% of spending in 2015. In many categories, like travel, baby boomers represent over 50% of consumption. Thus, the impact on the inclusive travel sector is significant, as over 40% of boomers are retiring with some form of disability. Currently they raised the total value of the inclusive tourism sector by more than 25%.

However, many of these marginalized groups, including PWDs, are not properly represented in tourism marketing materials, which traditionally cater to white, cisgender, heterosexual, and able-bodied men (Alderman, 2013; Cloquet, Palomino, Shaw, Stephen, & Taylor, 2018; Pritchard, 2001; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000). The recognition of PWDs in the tourism industry exceeds simply providing access to tourism venues and services; it also embraces a perspective of inclusiveness, where every individual has an active role. It also involves the engagement of marginalized groups in the ethical production or consumption of tourism and the sharing of its benefits (Cloquet et al., 2018; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) tourism market has always existed. However, this market has grown visibly in the past 20 years, reflecting advancements in LGBTQ+ rights and social acceptance, which has resulted in stronger marketing aimed at the LGBTQ+ demographic. For instance, this group tends to travel more, stay longer, and spend more money, which in 2018 resulted in \$100 billion in the United States and represented the largest discretionary spending of all niche markets. (CMI 2019). As with other marginalized groups, this market is diverse and complex; travelers are seeking out a wide variety of experiences, and if a destination's reputation is considered LGBTQ+-friendly, it may significantly increase the likelihood of selection.

Destination marketing organizations and tourism marketing firms can listen to the experiences and stories of

Professionals and policy makers need to make a conscious effort to include and integrate underrepresented travelers by providing a welcoming and safe environment.

underrepresented groups, and then help teach other travelers about the issues marginalized groups face while traveling. Furthermore, professionals and policy makers need to make a conscious effort to include and integrate underrepresented travelers by providing a welcoming and safe environment (Lee and Scott, 2017). Implementing more marketing and advertising collateral (e.g., travel brochures, advertisements, and commercials) that shows visible images of these markets actively participating and enjoying tourist activities and experiences can help improve marginalized representation and demonstrate the potential economic impact of these groups. These images are not just about displaying products and attractions; they also include representations of social groups and societies (Pritchard and Morgan 2000) and rely on racial and other demographic representations to

attract tourists to specific locations (Dillette, et al. 2018). Consequently, if multiple studies (Alderman 2013; Burto and Klemm 2011) have found that marginalized populations are not well represented in tourism marketing, how are tourism marketers planning to invite these fast-growing markets of tourists to their destinations? Whether or not the exclusion of underrepresented populations is purposeful in these

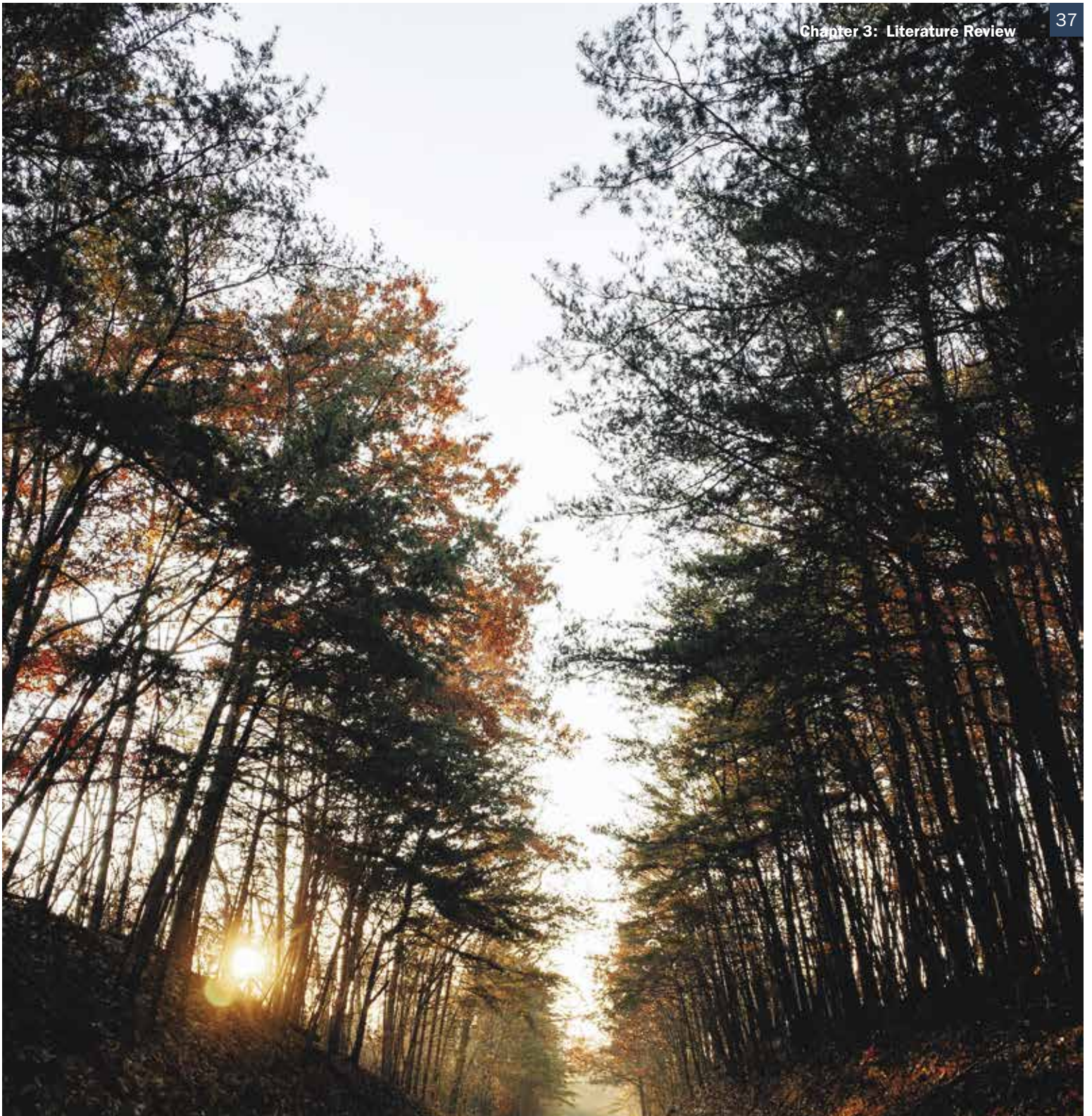
marketing materials, it may alienate underrepresented populations and send a message that they are not welcome.

Given the changing nature of demographics of the United States, communities and destinations would be well-served to appear as open and inclusive to one demographic group as any other.

Destination marketing organizations and tourism marketing firms can listen to the experiences and stories of underrepresented groups.

References:

- Alderman, Derek H. 2013. "Introduction to the Special Issue: African-Americans and Tourism." *Tourism Geographies* 15 (3): 375–79.
- Barbieri, C., & Mshenga, P. M. (2008). The role of the firm and owner characteristics on the performance of agritourism farms. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 48, 166–183.
- Burton, D., and M. Klemm. 2011. "Whiteness, Ethnic Minorities, and Advertising Travel Brochures." *The Service Industries Journal* 31:679–93.
- Busby, G., & S. Rendle (2000). The transition from tourism on farms to farm tourism. *Tourism Management*, 21, 635–42.
- Chase, L. C., Stewart, M., Schilling, B., Smith, B., & Walk, M. (2018). Agritourism: Toward a conceptual framework for industry analysis. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 8(1), 13–19.
- Chiappe, M.B. & Flora, C.B. (1998) Gendered elements of the alternative agriculture paradigm. *Rural Sociology*, 63 (3), 372–93.
- Claver-Cortés, E., Molina-Azorí, J. F., & Pereira-Moliner, J. (2007). Competitiveness in mass tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(3), 727–745.
- Cloquet, I., Palomino, M., Shaw, G., Stephen, G. & Taylor, T. (2018) Disability, social inclusion and the marketing of tourist attractions, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26(2), 221–237.
- Community Marketing & Insights. 2019. Accessed by <https://communitymarketinginc.com/>
- Contrino, Heather, and Nancy McGuckin. 2009. "Demographics Matter: Travel Demand, Options, and Characteristics among Minority Populations." *Public Works Management and Policy* 13 (4): 361–68.
- Dillette, A., Benjamin, S., and Carpenter, C. 2018. Tweeting the Black Travel Experience. Social media counternarrative stories as innovative insight on #TravelingWhileBlack. *Journal of Travel Research*, 1–16.
- Fennell, D. A. (2014). *Ecotourism*. Routledge.
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2004) More than an "industry": The forgotten power of tourism as a social force, *Tourism Management*, (27) p 1192–1208.
- Holden, Andrew. (2008) *Environment and Tourism*. New York, New York: Routledge.
- Hunter, C. (1997). Sustainable tourism as an adaptive paradigm. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(4), 850–867.
- Jenkins, C. L., & Henry, B. M. (1982). Government involvement in tourism in developing countries. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 9(4), 499–521.
- The International Ecotourism Society. (2019). Retrieved from: <https://ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism/>.
- Lee, K. J., and D. Scott. 2017. "Racial Discrimination and African-Americans' Travel Behavior: The Utility of Habitus and Vignette Technique." *Journal of Travel Research* 56 (3): 381–92.
- Lobo, R.E., Goldman, G.E., Jolly, D.A., Wallace, B.D., Schrader, W.L. & Parker, S.A. (1999). Agritourism benefits agriculture in San Diego County. *California-Agriculture* 53 (6), 20–24.
- Mandala Research. 2017. The African-American Traveler. Alexandria, VA: Mandala Research.
- McGehee, N. G. (2007). An agritourism systems model: A Weberian perspective. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 15(2), 111–124.
- McGehee, N. G., & Kim, K. (2004). Motivation for agritourism entrepreneurship. *Journal of travel research*, 43 (2), 161–170.
- McGehee, N.G., Kim, K., Klunenbenberg, S. & Bratsch, T. (2002) Agritourism in Virginia: An empirical Study. Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
- Miller, B. (1993). Farm tourism—Sustaining employment in a rural area. *Agricultural Manpower*, 1 (24), 8–11.
- Nickerson, N. P., R. J. Black, & S. F. McCool (2001). Agritourism: Motivations behind farm/ranch business diversification. *Journal of Travel Research*, 40 (1), 19–26.
- Pritchard, A. (2001). Tourism and representation: A scale for measuring gendered portrayals. *Leisure Studies*, 20(2), 79–94.
- Pritchard, A. & Morgan, N. (2000). Constructing tourism landscapes—gender, sexuality, and space. *Tourism Geographies*, 2, 115–139.
- Samson, H. (Producer). (2017, February 2). *Skift Podcast: The Evolution of Accessible Travel*. [Audio Podcast]. Retrieved from: <https://skift.com/2017/02/02/skift-podcast-the-evolution-of-accessible-travel/>
- Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities. *Tourism management*, 20(2), 245–249.
- Simpson, M. (2007) Community Benefit Tourism Initiatives—A conceptual oxymoron? *Tourism Management*, (29) p 1–18.
- Tapper, R. (2005) Wildlife Watching and tourism, *United Nations Environment Programme*. Retrieved from the website: http://www.cms.int/publications/pdf/CMS_WildlifeWatching.pdf
- Wall, G. (1997). "Sustainable tourism—Unsustainable development". In *Tourism, development and growth*, Edited by: Wahab, S. and Pigram, J. 33–49. London: Routledge.
- Weaver, David. (2008) *Sustainable Tourism*. Jordan Hill, Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann.
- Weaver, D. B., & D. A. Fennell (1997). The vacation farm sector in Saskatchewan: A Profile of operations. *Tourism Management*, 18 (6), 357–65.



Given the changing nature of demographics of the United States, communities and destinations would be well-served to appear as open and inclusive to one demographic group as any other.

4 The Appalachian Travel Economy

Travel in Appalachia is a nearly \$60 billion per year industry, directly employing over 577,000 workers across the Region while generating over \$4.5 billion dollars in tax revenue. It ranks among the largest industries in each of the 13 states, and it is also one of the Region's fastest growing employment sectors.

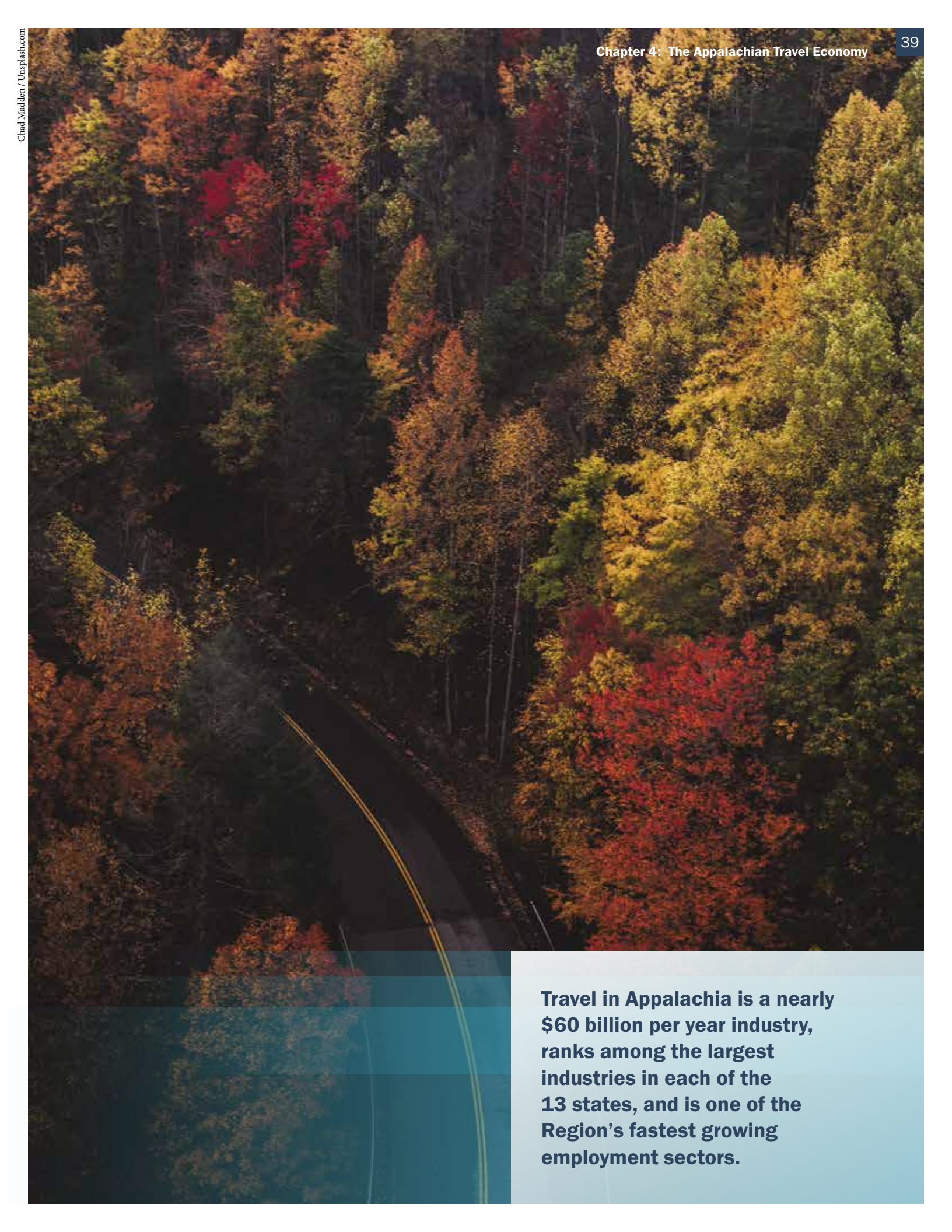
The figures cited in this chapter are compiled from travel data as reported by the 420 counties in the 13 ARC states. The research team used the most recent available data from the states. Since states have different reporting schedules and disclosure practices, figures from states may be from

different years. Alabama does not report data from counties with a single lodging establishment or fewer. As a result, two Alabama counties with no information were omitted. Also note that Virginia, in some cases, separates county and city data in reporting. Applicable Virginia cities within the ARC region are included in this analysis. These areas are referred to as “jurisdictions” in this chapter. References to “Appalachia” in this chapter are confined to the ARC-defined region.

It should also be noted that states may use different methodologies when estimating these numbers, making

Table 4.1: Travel expenditures and direct employment in ARC counties, by state

State	Appalachian Population	Source Date	Expenditures	Per Capita Expenditures	Direct Employment
Alabama	3,124,174	2017	\$5,868,698,000	\$1,878	54,559
Georgia	3,238,637	2017	\$4,296,740,000	\$1,326	40,250
Kentucky	1,165,923	2017	\$1,324,681,000	\$1,136	31,699
Maryland	251,146	2017	\$740,600,000	\$2,948	11,271
Mississippi	626,263	2017	\$771,228,000	\$1,231	10,773
New York	1,032,309	2016-17	\$1,839,176,000	\$1,782	34,340
North Carolina	1,757,158	2016	\$4,389,900,000	\$2,498	39,960
Ohio	1,999,505	2016	\$5,256,700,000	\$2,629	61,995
Pennsylvania	5,687,435	2015	\$21,286,500,000	\$3,743	158,027
South Carolina	1,270,304	2016	\$1,972,440,000	\$1,553	15,960
Tennessee	2,894,190	2014	\$6,612,440,000	\$2,285	61,690
Virginia	748,182	2016	\$1,526,150,000	\$2,040	13,600
West Virginia	1,815,857	2012	\$4,112,200,000	\$2,265	43,825
Total	25,611,363		\$59,997,453,000	\$2,343	577,315

An aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road with double yellow lines, cutting through a dense forest. The trees are in various stages of autumn, with some showing vibrant reds and oranges, while others are still green or yellow. The lighting suggests a sunny day, with shadows cast across the road and the forest floor.

Travel in Appalachia is a nearly \$60 billion per year industry, ranks among the largest industries in each of the 13 states, and is one of the Region's fastest growing employment sectors.

Table 4.2: Appalachian counties with the largest travel expenditures

State	County	Expenditures	Population	ARC Economic Status
Pennsylvania	Allegheny	\$5,987,000,000	1,223,348	Competitive
Tennessee	Sevier	\$2,031,320,000	89,889	Transitional
Alabama	Jefferson	\$1,889,418,000	658,466	Transitional
Pennsylvania	Monroe	\$1,788,200,000	169,842	Transitional
Gwinnett	Georgia	\$1,328,020,000	805,321	Transitional
Alabama	Madison	\$1,189,201,000	334,811	Transitional
South Carolina	Greenville	\$1,187,250,000	451,225	Transitional
North Carolina	Buncombe	\$1,071,660,000	238,318	Transitional
Tennessee	Hamilton	\$1,016,110,000	336,463	Transitional
Tennessee	Knox	\$1,014,980,000	432,226	Transitional

Table 4.3: Appalachian counties with the smallest travel expenditures

State	County	Expenditures	Population	ARC Economic Status
Mississippi	Kemper	\$1,462,000	10,456	Distressed
West Virginia	Wirt	\$1,400,000	5,717	At-Risk
Tennessee	Hancock	\$1,210,000	6,819	Distressed
Kentucky	Elliott	\$1,158,000	7,852	Distressed
Mississippi	Choctaw	\$1,069,000	8,547	At-Risk
Mississippi	Benton	\$855,000	8,729	Distressed
Alabama	Lamar	\$818,000	14,564	At-Risk
Kentucky	Owsley	\$576,000	4,755	Distressed
Kentucky	Menifee	\$501,000	6,306	Distressed
Alabama	Clay	\$329,000	13,932	Transitional

comparisons across states inappropriate. However, the research team believes that these estimates are sufficient to provide context and reasonable estimations.¹⁶

The tables above refer to travel expenditures and travel employment. As mentioned earlier, tourism is a subset of the overall travel economy; travel also includes business travel, travel for health reasons, relocation, and travel for family events or emergencies. A trip may combine many of these activities. As a result, it can be difficult to discern tourism

from travel as a whole. States, therefore, typically do not try to make these distinctions and report only economic impacts for travel in general.

Expenditures

Not surprisingly, as seen in Table 4.1, states with the larger populations in their Appalachian areas typically report the highest levels of travel spending. Likewise, states with large urban centers and larger overall populations also demonstrate higher levels of activity.

¹⁶ A full list of the data sources is listed at the end of this chapter.

The top-earning travel destinations follow a similar pattern (see Table 4.2). Large urban centers, led by Pittsburgh (Allegheny

Table 4.4: Appalachian counties with the largest direct employment in travel

State	County	Direct Employment	Population	ARC Economic Status
Pennsylvania	Allegheny	40,888	1,223,348	Competitive
Tennessee	Sevier	22,560	89,889	Transitional
Alabama	Jefferson	18,468	658,466	Transitional
Pennsylvania	Monroe	13,411	169,842	Transitional
Gwinnett	Georgia	13,090	805,321	Transitional
North Carolina	Buncombe	11,290	238,318	Transitional
Alabama	Madison	10,378	334,811	Transitional
South Carolina	Greenville	10,310	451,225	Transitional
Tennessee	Knox	9,860	432,226	Transitional
Ohio	Mahoning	9,553	238,823	Transitional

County, Pennsylvania) and Birmingham (Jefferson County, Alabama), are among the top destinations in the Region. Popular destinations such as the Great Smoky Mountains (Sevier County, Tennessee), the Poconos (Monroe County, Pennsylvania), and Asheville (Buncombe County, North Carolina) are also among the top sites. These five sites, when combined, represent expenditures of over \$13 billion, which accounts for almost 22% of the Region's overall travel expenditures; in fact, about 10% comes from Allegheny County alone.

Likewise, the counties with the lowest reported travel expenditures are predominantly rural, and most are classified as economically distressed by ARC (see Table 4.3).¹⁷ Please note, again, that these are only counties for which data are reported; other counties may indeed have lower expenditure levels.

Employment

As expected, as seen in Tables 4.4 and 4.5, county-level data based on employment in the travel industry follows a similar trend as that based on expenditures.

An analysis of the data indicates that travel expenditures and employment are unevenly distributed among the Region's

420 counties—even when population is taken into account. As noted previously, about a third of the Region's travel is concentrated in the top 10 counties. As the following graphs show, the bulk of Appalachia's travel impacts appear to take place in a small number of counties.

Fifty percent of the Region's direct travel expenditures are collected by just 27 counties. These counties account for only 33% of the Region's population. This distribution of expenditures can be seen in Figure 4.1. Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of direct travel employment across the Region, which is similar. As can be seen, much of the employment is limited to a small number of counties. In this case, 34 counties employ half of the Region's travel-related workforce, even though these counties account for only 36% of the population in Appalachia.

Large cities and established destinations offer visitors a wider array of experiences and services, and, as a result, have higher expenditure and employment numbers. Given that these numbers reflect all travel and not just tourism, it should also be noted that these counties typically have more businesses and institutions (colleges, hospitals, etc.), which also attract travelers.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the relationship between tourism

¹⁷ Economic Status levels determined by ARC index. For more information see: https://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/countyeconomicstatusanddistressedareasinappalachia.asp.

Table 4.5: Appalachian counties with the smallest direct employment in travel

State	County	Direct Employment	Population	ARC Economic Status
Kentucky	Green	17	11,258	At-Risk
Mississippi	Choctaw	15	8,547	At-Risk
Kentucky	Metcalfe	14	10,099	At-Risk
Alabama	Clay	13	13,932	Transitional
Mississippi	Benton	12	8,729	Distressed
Tennessee	Cannon	10	13,801	Transitional
Tennessee	Hancock	10	6,819	Distressed
Tennessee	Jackson	10	11,638	Distressed
Tennessee	Morgan	10	21,987	Distressed
Alabama	Lamar	8	14,564	At-Risk

expenditures and population size. For the most part, large population centers such as Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh), Jefferson County, Alabama (Birmingham), and Gwinnett County, Georgia (Metro Atlanta), demonstrate high levels of travel spending and employment. Most of the region's smaller counties report much lower levels of activity. Some exceptions, however, can be found. Sevier County, Tennessee (the Great Smokey Mountains), Monroe County, Pennsylvania (the Poconos), and Jefferson County, West Virginia (Harper's Ferry), are smaller communities with higher-than-average travel expenditures and employment levels.

These maps also show the impact large travel destinations have on surrounding areas. Note, for example, the clusters of counties surrounding high-activity centers such as Pittsburgh, Sevier County, Tennessee, and Birmingham, Alabama. The benefits of high levels of activity in these areas appear to extend to many neighboring communities.

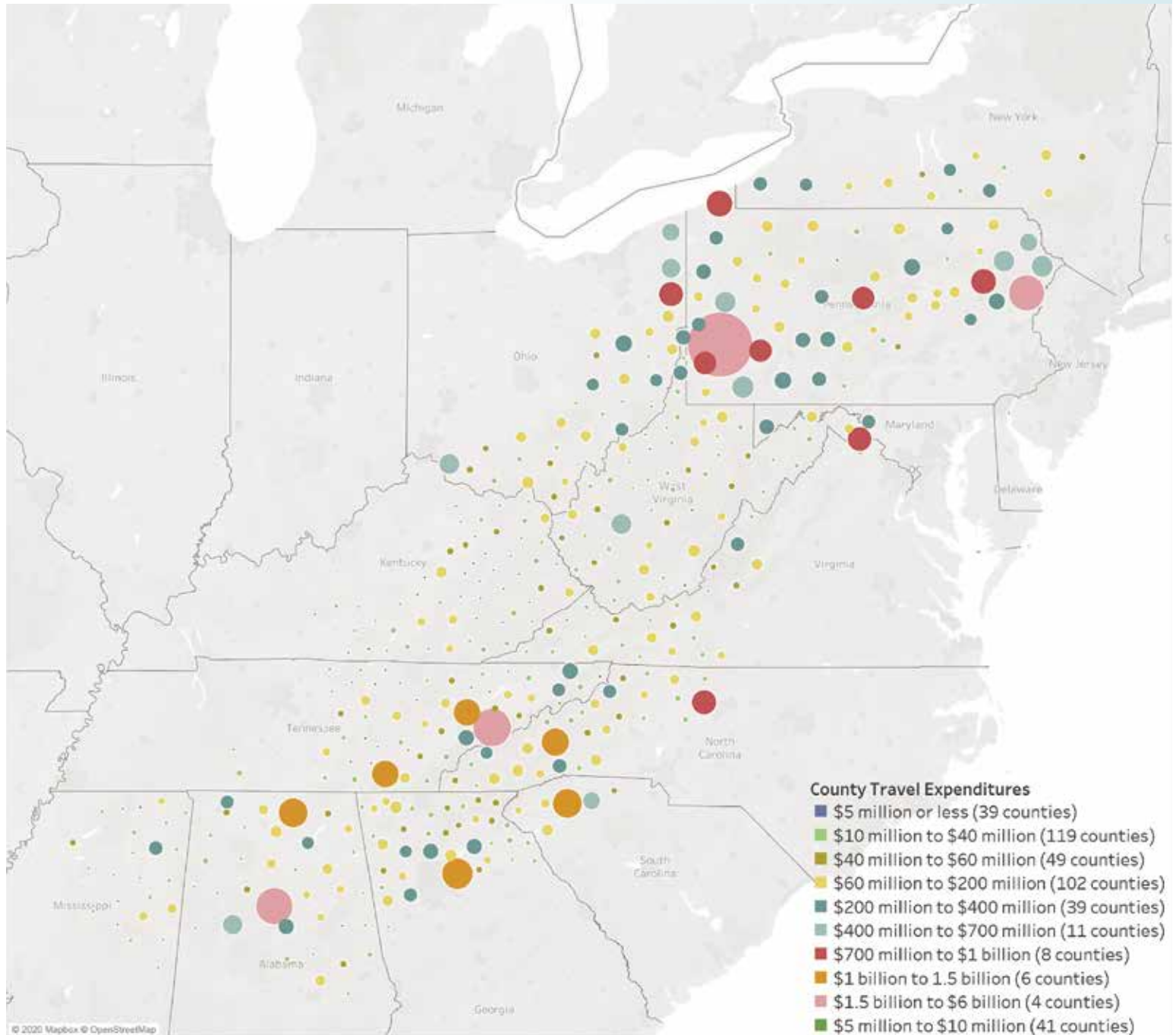
It is important for communities to consider both direct and indirect benefits from tourism.

Despite the distribution of expenditures and employment to a small number of, for the most part, highly populated counties, it is important to remember that a small number of visitors can have a large impact on a small community. In addition to these expenditure and employment numbers, travel creates opportunities for entrepreneurship and helps improve the quality of life in small communities, through improved dining, lodging, and recreational opportunities. In turn, this promotes new investment, which not only helps retain existing families and business, but also attracts new residents. As such, it is important for communities to consider both direct and indirect benefits from tourism.

These figures also hint at the importance of regional planning and partnerships. Smaller communities should work with larger markets to promote their local attractions and venues. State and regional agencies should also assist smaller and more rural communities in the development of strategies that might help them benefit from the travel activities taking place at larger, more established sites.

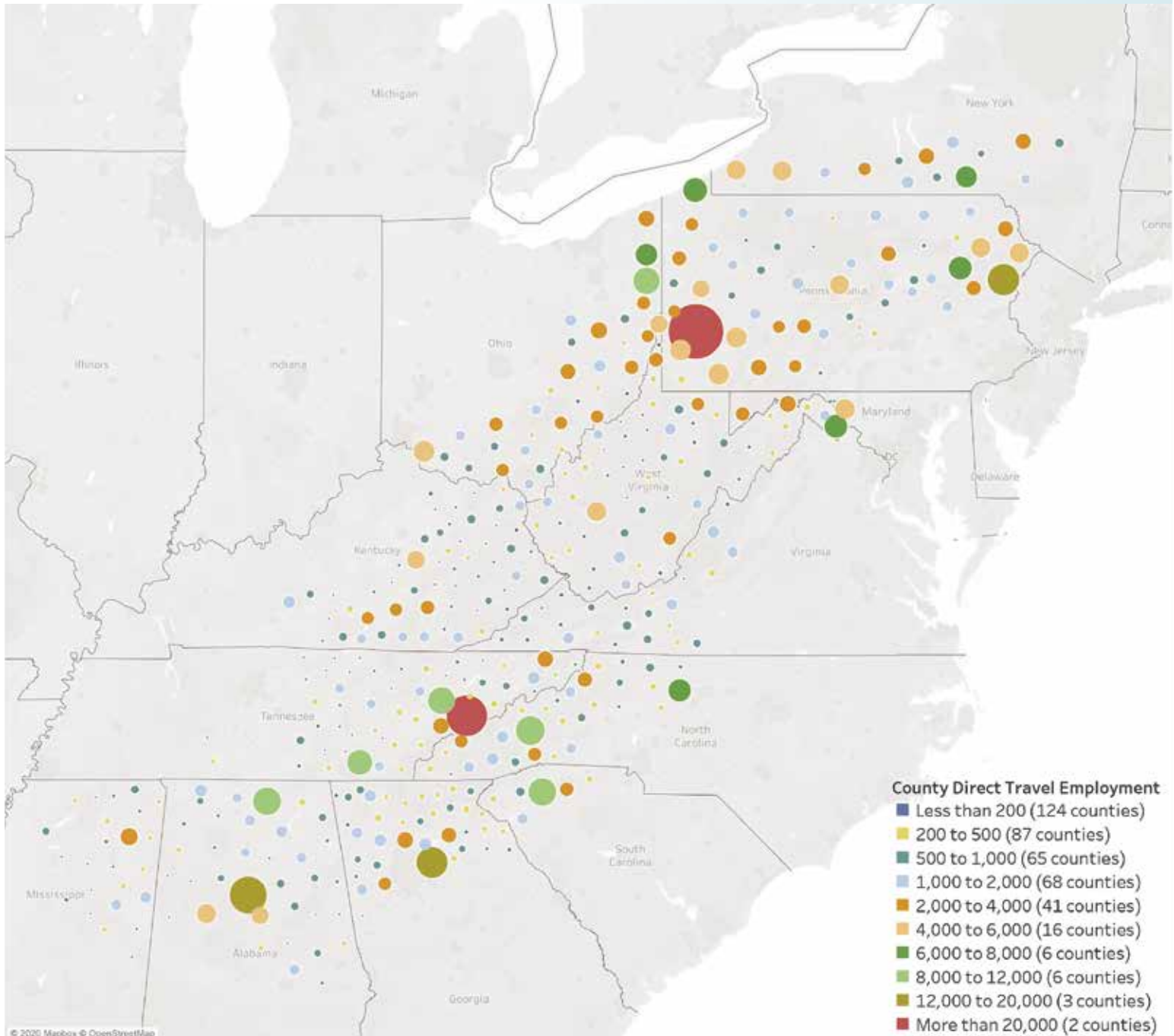
Lastly, small and rural destinations should remember that they can offer experiences unavailable in larger destinations. While popular sites like the Great Smoky Mountains and Asheville, North Carolina offer a wide range of activities and amenities, these destinations may also have larger crowds and higher prices. Some travelers may therefore seek out the authenticity and tranquility of smaller, more rural areas.

f4.1 Distribution of travel expenditures across Appalachian counties



Map showing levels of direct travel expenditures across counties in the ARC region. Circles are proportional to spending levels. Independent cities in Virginia are combined with their respective counties. Counties in Alabama that do not report data are not shown.

f4.2 Distribution of travel employment across Appalachian counties



Map showing levels of direct travel employment across counties in the ARC region. Circles sizes are proportional to employment levels. Independent cities in Virginia are combined with their respective counties. Counties in Alabama that do not report data are not shown.



Data Sources

The following sources were used to determine state and county travel expenditures, employment, and, when possible, tax revenues. As noted, many states use different methodologies, schedules, and levels of access.

Alabama: Alabama Tourism Department, "Travel: Economic Impact, 2016," April 2017.

Georgia: Georgia Department of Economic Development and US Travel Association, "2017 Travel Economic Impact on Georgia State, Counties And Regions," December 2018.

Kentucky: Kentucky Tourism, Arts, and Heritage Cabinet and Certec, Inc., "Economic Impact of Kentucky's Travel and Tourism Industry—2016 And 2017," May 2018.

Maryland: Maryland Tourism Board, "FY 2017 Maryland Tourism Board Annual Report," undated; Tourism Economics, "Economic Impact of Tourism in Maryland, Calendar Year 2017 Analysis," Undated.

Mississippi: Visit Mississippi, "Tourism Economic Impact Report, 2017," undated.

New York: Tourism Economics, "The Economic Impact of Tourism in New York," reports for Chautauqua-Allegheny Region, Finger Lakes Region, Central New York Region, and Catskills Region, 2016 and 2017, undated.

North Carolina: U.S. Travel Association and Visit North Carolina, "The Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties, 2016," October 2017; U.S. Travel Association, "Revised County Level Visitor Expenditures, 2016," undated.

Ohio: Tourism Economics, "The Economic Impact of Tourism in The Appalachian Region of Ohio," June 2016.

Pennsylvania: The Economic Impact of Travel in Pennsylvania: Tourism Satellite Account, Calendar Year 2015," undated; Longwoods International, "Pennsylvania Annual Travel Profile, 2015 Travel Year," undated.

South Carolina: South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, "County Level Visitation Estimates," March 2017; South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism and U.S. Travel Association, "The Economic Impact of Travel on South Carolina Counties, 2016," August 2017.

Tennessee: Tennessee Department of Tourist Development and U.S. Travel Association, "The Economic Impact of Hospitality & Tourism on the State of Tennessee," 2012 and 2014; Tennessee Department of Tourist Development and U.S. Travel Association, "2017 Economic Impact of Travel on Tennessee Counties," August 2018.

Virginia: Virginia Tourism Authority and U.S. Travel Association, "The Economic Impact of Domestic Travel on Virginia Counties, 2016," September 2017.

West Virginia: Dean Runyan Associates, "West Virginia Travel Impacts, 2000-2016," August 2017. 357-65.

5 The Appalachian Visitor

The visitor survey suggested a number of trends about Appalachian travelers. Most survey participants were white, middle-class, and middle-aged. They traveled with a spouse or family and had annual household income between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year. They had a college degree or, at the very least, some college experience. Participants were primarily interested in outdoor recreation, but also enjoyed local food, heritage, arts, and culture. They liked to travel the backroads, but, paradoxically, preferred chain hotels that are usually located near the interstates. They planned their travel in advance and utilized online resources before, during, and after their trips.

Yet the survey also suggests potential changes in the Region's tourism market and suggests areas for growth and expansion. Increasing diversity in both travelers and tastes, new technologies, and emerging entrepreneurship opportunities point to a more equitable and sustainable tourism economy.

One of the more striking findings from the survey was the lack of racial diversity among visitors to the Region.

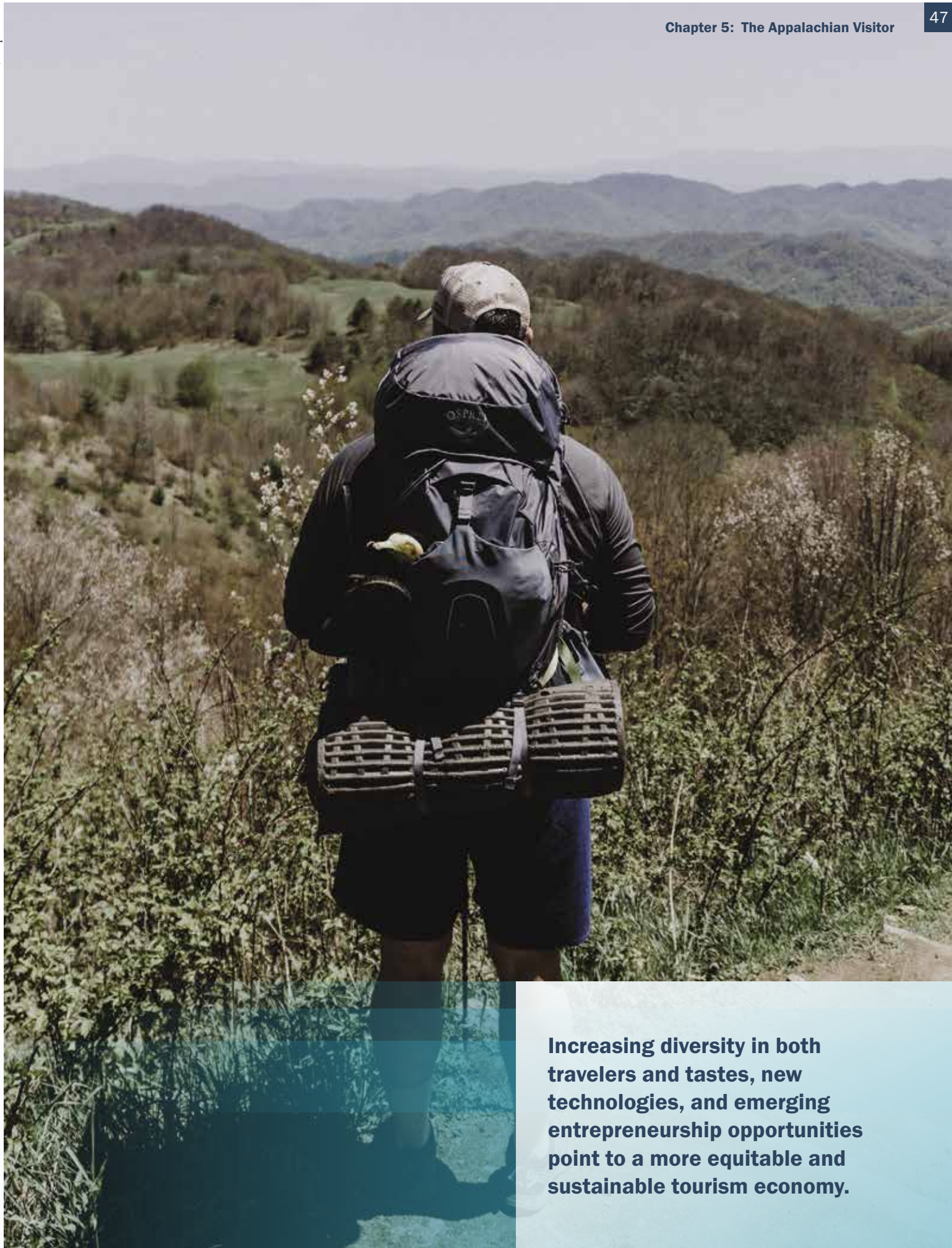
It is important to keep in mind, however, that the results of the survey may not be representative of tourists throughout Appalachia as a whole. Given the nature of the distribution of the survey, not all pockets of the Region—both geographically, and in terms of nature of the destination—may have been adequately represented. Nevertheless, the sample size (n=582) is sufficient to provide some meaningful insights regarding tourists in the Region.

Demographics

While the majority of respondents were between 35 and 65 years of age, about 20% were under 35, and about 15% were over 65. Approximately two-thirds of respondents reported that they were traveling for leisure. Others were visiting family and friends (17%) or on business travel (9%). Over half reported household incomes between \$35,000 and \$100,000 per year, and an additional 30% reported household incomes of more than \$100,000.

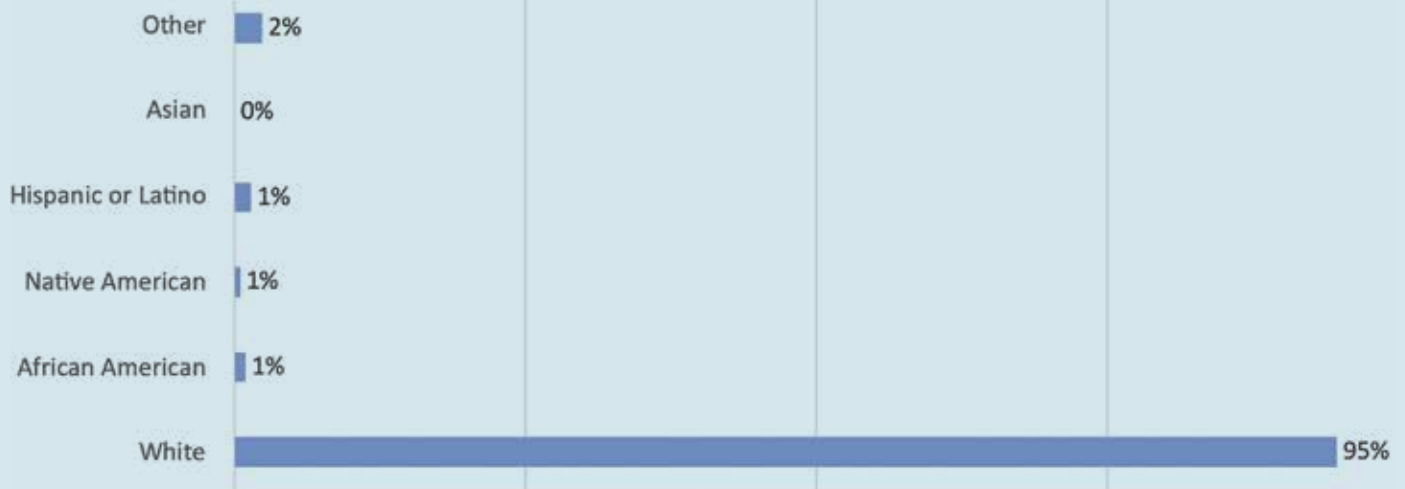
While 23 states were represented in the survey, about 90% of visitors were from the 13 states of the Region—including both the Appalachian and non-Appalachian portions. In fact, almost half (48%) of all respondents did not reside in the ARC region. This suggests that many visitors to the Region come from the non-Appalachian portions of the states within the Region.

One of the more striking findings from the survey was the lack of racial diversity among visitors to the Region. Almost 95% of visitors surveyed were white. Less than 2% were Hispanic or Latino, and only about 1% were African-



Increasing diversity in both travelers and tastes, new technologies, and emerging entrepreneurship opportunities point to a more equitable and sustainable tourism economy.

f5.1 Racial and ethnic composition of Appalachian visitors



North Carolina and Tennessee were the most popular destinations reported.

American. These numbers are somewhat surprising given the diverse populations of many Appalachian states, as well as the Region's proximity to several large, racially diverse urban centers.

However, while these numbers from the visitor survey may appear low, they align closely with other recent visitor findings. For instance, the most recent visitor study conducted by the Great Smoky Mountains National Park found that less than 1% of its visitors were African-American. A similar 2017 study conducted by the U.S. Forest Service found that African-Americans comprised just 1.5% of visitors to the Cherokee National Forest.¹⁸

Destinations

Travelers in the survey reported traveling to destinations in

each of the 13 states in the Region. The majority, however, were going to states in Central and South Central Appalachia. North Carolina and Tennessee were the most popular destinations reported. The fewest number of respondents were en route to Mississippi, New York, and Maryland. Again, it is important to note the lack of representativeness of the survey; distribution channels and efforts were much more focused in the central parts of the Region.

To gather information regarding the destinations, participants in the survey were presented with a map of the Region and asked to touch or click on either their final destination or the destination they were most excited to visit. These responses were then transformed into a heat map, as seen in Figure 5.3, which shows a high level of interest in Central and South Central Appalachia.

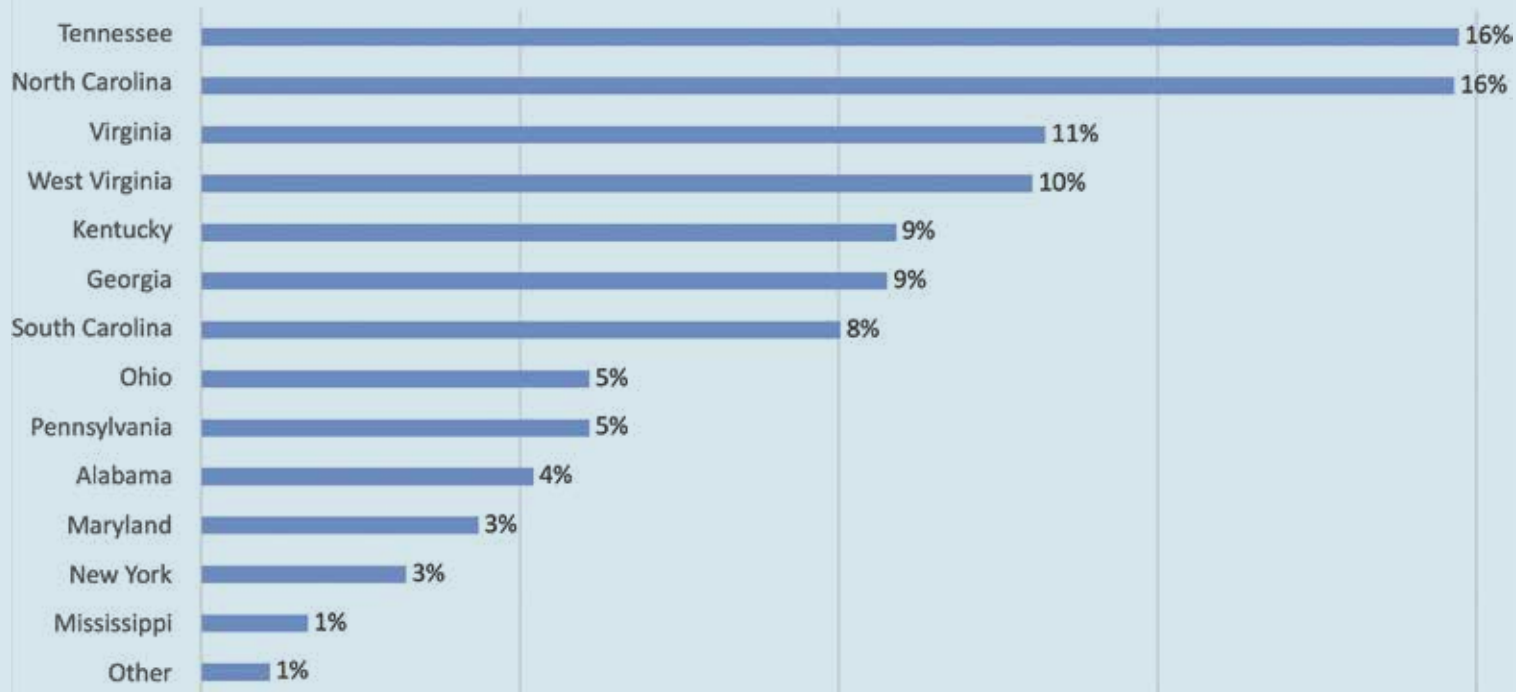
Activities

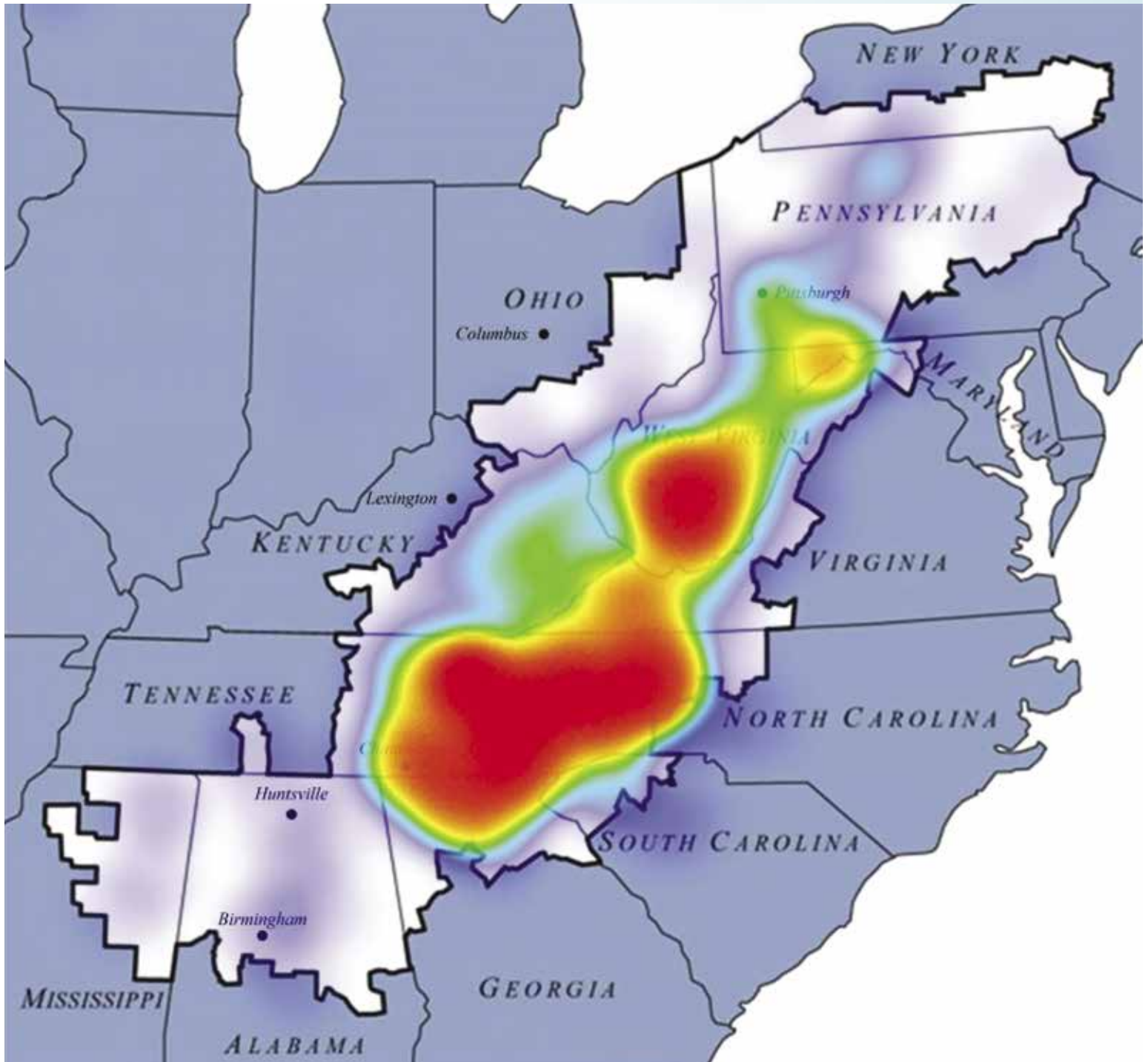
Appalachia's natural assets, by and large, are the Region's main attractions for visitors. However, these natural assets

¹⁸ Eleonora Papadogiannaki, Ann Braak, Nancy Holmes, Douglas Eury, and Steven J. Hollenhorst, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Visitor Study, Fall 2008: Park Studies Unit Visitor Services Project Report 205 (Moscow: University of Idaho, July 2009); USDA Forest Service, Region 8, "Visitor Use Report, Cherokee NF," <https://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum/>.

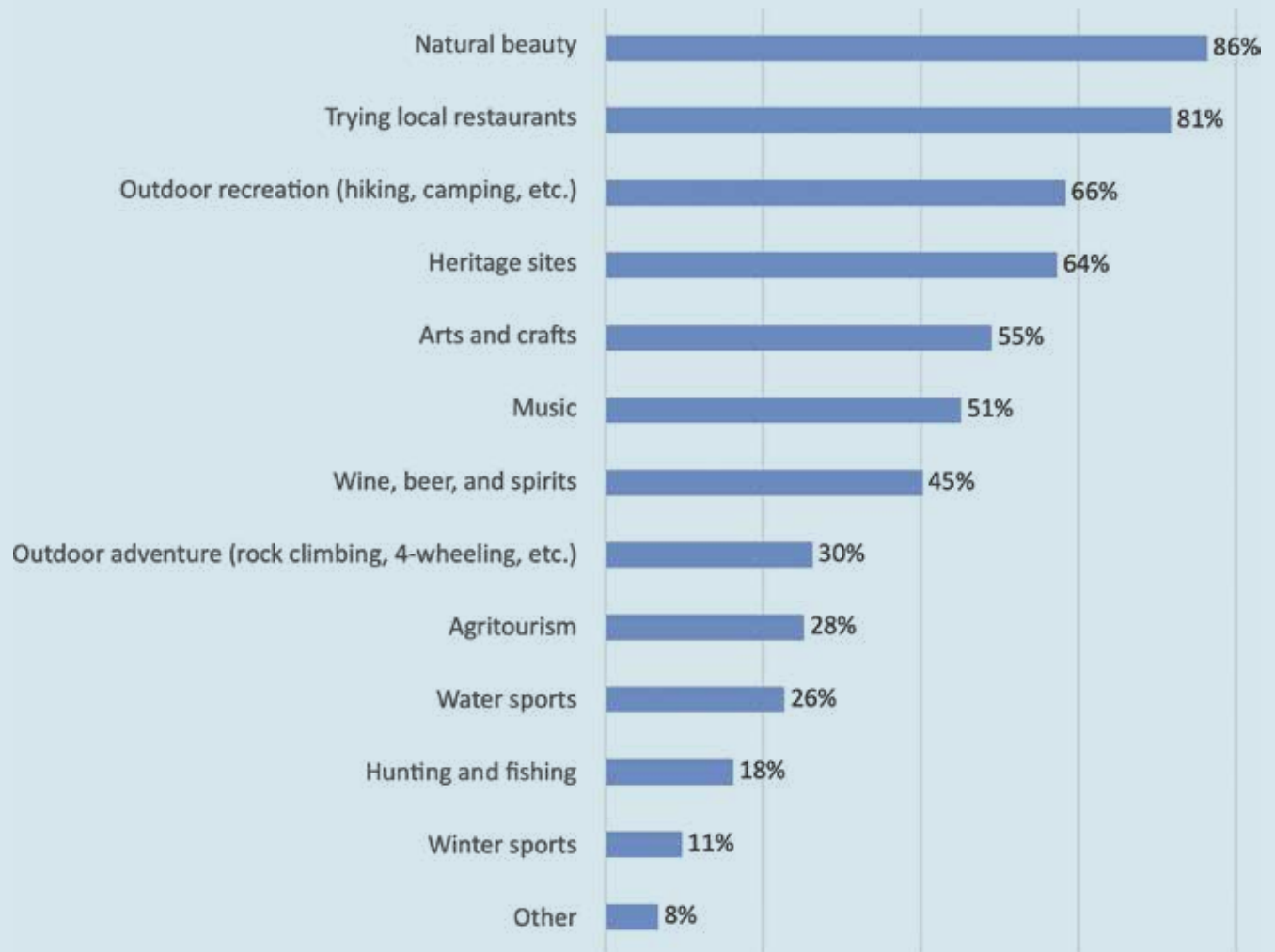


f5.2 Destination states for Appalachian visitors



f5.3 Heat map of visitor destinations

f5.4 Activities preferred by Appalachian visitors



Participants were primarily interested in outdoor recreation, but also enjoyed local food, heritage, arts, and culture.

and related outdoor activities vary widely throughout Appalachia. They range from passive pastimes, such as simply driving and enjoying the scenery, to more active pursuits, such as adventure and water sports. Yet, while Appalachia's natural amenities make up the foundation of the Region's tourism industry, other features are also very popular. As seen in Figure 5.4, these include local food, historical and cultural sites, regional music, arts and crafts, and locally produced wines, beers, and spirits.

Conclusion

There are few regions in the United States that possess the inherent tourism resources of the Appalachian Region. The natural, cultural, and historical resources have the ability to draw visitors from across the country, and the Region is especially popular among residents of neighboring counties and states. However, like anywhere in the country, the Region would be well-served to increase the number of visits from a diverse, underrepresented group of potential travelers.

Case Study: Erwin, Tennessee

Erwin, Tennessee had been a railroad town for 135 years, until this identity suddenly ended at 3:00 p.m. on October 15, 2015, when the last coal train departed from the town. Stunned by this loss, local residents and officials faced a daunting task: They not only had to rebuild the economy of their small Appalachian community, they also had to redefine it.¹⁹

Difficult History

This already-formidable challenge was made even more difficult by an episode from Erwin's past. A century earlier, the community played a role in a sad and abhorrent event, the unnecessarily cruel killing of a condemned circus elephant named Mary. Mary's hanging, and a photograph of the event, was soon associated with Erwin and became a burden inflicted on subsequent generations.²⁰

Erwin's response to this loss has forged a new narrative for the community and its residents. A spirit of innovation has helped transform the town in just a few short years. Today, Erwin is building a new and brighter future. In doing so, it provides a case study for communities moving away from old legacies, and how they can welcome new ideas and new people.

¹⁹ Sue Guinn Legg, "CSX closure ends more than 100 years of railroad operations in Erwin," Johnson City Press, October 15, 2015.

²⁰ Corey Turner and Claire Lombardo, "The Town That Hanged An Elephant Is Now Working To Save Them" National Public Radio, All Things Considered, May 15, 2019.



Erwin, Tennessee

**“No one is coming to save Erwin,
so we have to save ourselves.”
– Local Stakeholder**



COUNTY FACTS

County	Unicoi
Population (2017) ¹	17,759
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$23,031
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	6.8%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	20.1%
ARC status (2020) ²	At-Risk

CITY FACTS

Founded (Erwin) ³	1876
Miles to interstate (I-26) ⁴	4
Miles to state capitol (Nashville) ⁴	279
Miles to nearest metro area (Johnson City) ⁴	13
Miles to nearest commercial airport (Tri-Cities Airport) ⁴	31

SOURCES

¹ “The Appalachian Region.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² “Socioeconomic Data.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ <https://www.erwintn.org/history>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

A New Vision for New Residents

The closing of the rail facility was a wake-up call for Erwin’s leaders, particularly the town’s mayor, Doris Hensley. After a few days of “mourning” the loss of the railyard’s 360 jobs, she began working with stakeholders to craft a new vision for the community. The mayor and other officials reached out to local business owners and employers to create a new and inviting vision for the community.

Erwin’s leaders were particularly interested in engaging younger residents in this visioning and planning process. They noted that, while many young people worked in local industries, few chose to live in Erwin, with many commuting from homes in the Tri-cities area (Johnson City, Kingsport, and Bristol), about fifteen miles away.

During this planning process, leaders learned that while young people were drawn to the Erwin’s natural amenities—such as the Nolichucky River and local hiking trails—they were turned off by the community’s downtown area. Younger people wanted the downtown to be “a destination,” an area with restaurants, music, and things to do. They also wanted a place where they could enjoy a beer or a mixed drink, activities not allowed in Erwin until 2014.

Armed with this information, Erwin’s leaders created a downtown revitalization plan. Working with state officials, they secured over \$1 million in funds to improve their downtown area. Projects ranged from new sidewalks and façade improvements to a skate park. Town officials also worked with the Appalachian Regional Commission to expand broadband access and promote entrepreneurship and business development. They also created RISE Erwin, a group of young professionals living and working in the community.²¹

These investments quickly paid dividends. New restaurants, including a coffee house, opened downtown. Other types of businesses, such as an art gallery and rafting companies, also opened. While ground floor storefronts are drawing new businesses, vacant upstairs areas are being converted into downtown residences. The town is growing, attracting new citizens not only from the Tri-cities area, but also from nearby Asheville, which for some people has become too crowded and expensive.²²

While these changes were designed to help recruit new residents, they have also helped boost the number of visitors. Increasingly, Erwin is now seen as a tourism destination, with the town having become a popular day-trip destination for motorcyclists and outdoor enthusiasts. It is also becoming a popular stop for thru-hikers on the Appalachian Trail, which passes just a couple of miles from the downtown area.

Owning the Past, Redefining the Future

At the same time local leaders were working to revitalize their downtown, they also faced another challenge: the 100th anniversary of the infamous hanging of a circus elephant named Mary. For decades, some residents seemed content with trying to ignore the event, with many hoping it would “just go away.” Many more residents, however, recognized that this could never happen in the digital age.

Frustrated by what was perceived by some as inaction to even acknowledge the event, RISE Erwin took action to change the narrative surrounding the event. While this group knew that they might bring new attention to the tragedy, they wanted to turn it into something positive. So, they reached out to another group associated with elephants, The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee.

Jamie Rice, President of RISE Erwin, did not know how her call would be received. The sanctuary, located in Hohenwald, Tennessee, is one of the largest elephant rescue organizations in the nation, and a tireless advocate for the protection and conservation of the animals. Some members of RISE feared they might be rebuffed.

²¹ Natalie Delgadillo, “Meet the Mayor Who Used Millennials to Revive Her Small Town,” *Governing*, July 14, 2017.

²² State of Tennessee, Rural Task Force, “Erwin Downtown Revitalization and Broadband,” <https://www.tn.gov/ruraltaskforce/best-practices/tennessee-downtowns/erwin-downtown-revitalization-and-broadband.html>.

However, sanctuary leaders welcomed the call. “You don’t know how many people,” they stated, “come here and ask about Mary.” It was as if they had been waiting for Erwin to reach out to them for years, and they immediately offered their support and formed a partnership with the town. Together, they organized the Erwin Elephant Revival, a celebration of elephants and a fund-raiser for the sanctuary.

As part of the celebration they also created a new local tradition. Fiberglass elephants, painted by local artists, are placed around the area every fall. At the end of the year, the fiberglass elephants are auctioned off, with proceeds from the auction helping to support the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee and other charities.²³

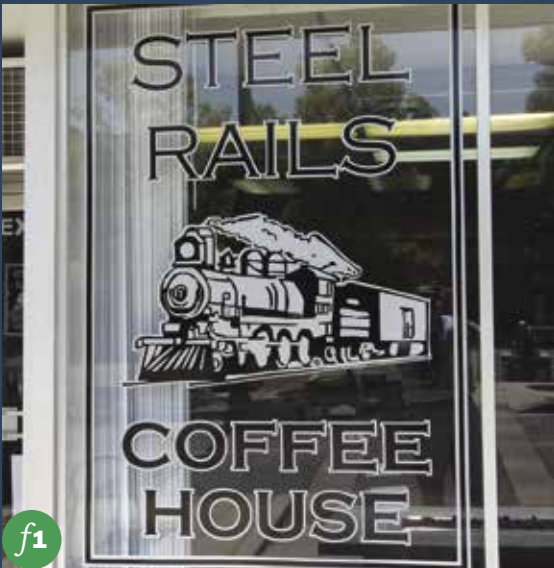
These efforts have garnered national attention and have transformed a negative act from the past into a positive force for good. Erwin’s efforts have increased local pride, beautified its downtown, and attracted visitors.

Building on Local Assets, Addressing Lingerin Issues

Efforts designed to make Erwin a better place to live and work have also made it a better place to visit. Tourism is now one of the community’s fastest growing industries. While this growth has created economic benefits for the community, it has also exposed some barriers to tourism growth:

- While improvements have been made in recent years, dining and lodging options could be expanded and further improved. Some locals are hopeful that Airbnb will create new opportunities.
- Hikers like coming to Erwin, but there is no good connection between the Appalachian Trail and downtown. Local officials are looking for improvements to facilitate a better connection.
- Although the town has a celebrated rail history, due to various issues, it’s proven difficult to run exhibition trains for visitors.
- While the community is trying to grow tourism, Erwin lacks a full-time tourism director.

²³ Turner and Lombardo, “Town that Hanged An Elephant”; Sue Guinn Legg, “Elephant auction nets \$16,700 for local charities and more,” *Johnson City Press*, October 20, 2018.



f1

New businesses, like this coffee house, have made Erwin a more attractive place to live.



f2

A skate park is one of many downtown improvements meant to help attract younger residents and visitors.



f3

Downtown elephants are helping change Erwin's image, both literally and figuratively.



f4

Erwin needs better ways to connect downtown to the Appalachian Trail, about three miles away.

**“It’s not always about money.
It’s about creating a place that
we really want to live in.”
– Local Stakeholder**

Workforce issues are also a concern. Addiction issues, particularly with opioids, make it difficult at times for employers to find and retain employees.

A lack of entrepreneurship may also be a problem. Many residents—perhaps younger people with student load debt—appear reluctant to take the risk.

Lessons Learned

Erwin offers a number of important lessons for communities facing a difficult economic transition. These include the following:

- People like to visit places where people want to live. If you want to create a destination for visitors, start by building activities and amenities for your residents.
- Many communities have difficult issues in their past. Erwin demonstrates the best way to deal with your history: Own it and try to make things right. Visitors will acknowledge and appreciate your efforts.
- Engaging and empowering young people recognizes their importance as potential workers, residents, and visitors. Including them in planning in a meaningful way helps prepare your community for future growth.
- Erwin shows the importance of effective planning in redevelopment and revitalization efforts. Good planning helps create partnerships, and these in turn can help attract funding for local improvements.

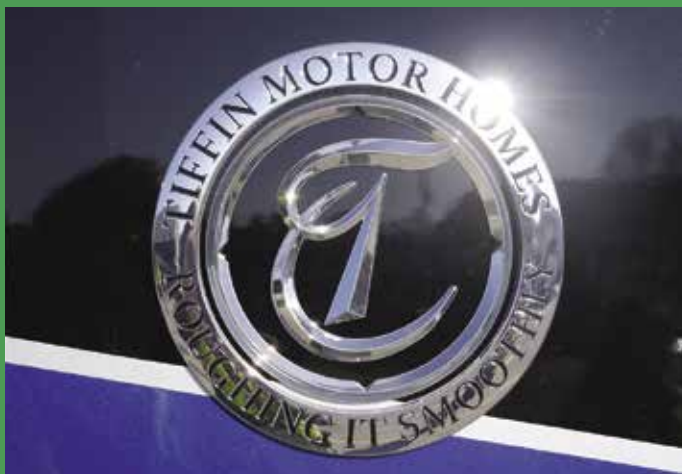
Case Study: Red Bay, Alabama

Many rural communities struggle to attract guests for brief visits or day trips, let alone overnight or multi-day stays. Red Bay, a small town in Northwest Alabama, is not one of these communities.

Home to Tiffin Motorhomes

In fact, the community attracts dozens of visitors every day, some of which stay for several days. For Red Bay, the challenge is not so much in bringing visitors to their attractions, but rather enhancing the existing experiences, as well as creating new ones.

The source of this phenomenon is somewhat unique, as Red Bay is home to Tiffin Motorhomes, a major manufacturer of luxury recreational vehicles (RVs). A major local employer, Tiffin has over 2,000 workers at its plants in Red Bay and nearby Mississippi. The Red Bay plant is the brand's manufacturing plant, and it also houses a large maintenance facility.



Tiffin RVs, proudly built in Red Bay, Alabama.



Tiffin RVs are among the most luxurious and most expensive on the market.

A Stream of Visitors

Tiffin's RVs do not come cheap. They are considered some of the finest in the country, and their prices reflect the quality workmanship. A fully loaded top-of-the-line Tiffin Phaeton, which is the size of a bus, comes complete with four large-screen TVs, indoor and outdoor freezers, heated floors, and a fireplace. These units can cost \$700,000 or more.

Given this level of investment, it is not surprising that the brand has developed quite a following, which consists of both current owners and prospective ones. The complexity of the RVs also necessitates periodic maintenance of various systems, which brings visitors to Red Bay on a regular basis. Owners come for maintenance visits, and also to learn about new units and possible upgrades. Prospective owners visit to learn more about the units, tour completed RVs, and explore various options and costs.

Tiffin offers a daily tour of its manufacturing plant to visitors. The tour, which begins and ends in a well-appointed welcome center, takes visitors through the manufacturing process. It also describes the various models and options available to customers.

The tours, which start with a video introduction, are led by friendly guides using wireless audio systems. During peak season, a tour may have as many as 50 guests.

Maintenance for visiting owners is performed on a first-come, first-served basis. In fact, no appointments are accepted. As a result, owners sometimes have to wait several days for a maintenance opportunity. To accommodate these visitors, Tiffin

Red Bay, Alabama



COUNTY FACTS

County	Franklin
Population (2017) ¹	31,495
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$23,303
Three-Year Average Unemployment Rate (2015-2017) ²	5.5%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	23%
ARC status (2020) ²	At-Risk

CITY FACTS

Founded (Red Bay) ³	1907
Miles to interstate (I-22) ⁴	25
Miles to state capitol (Montgomery, AL) ⁴	207
Miles to nearest metro area (Tupelo, MS) ⁴	45
Miles to nearest commercial airport (Huntsville International Airport) ⁴	86

SOURCES

¹ "The Appalachian Region." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² "Socioeconomic Data." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ "Red Bay Visitors Guide". <http://franklincountychamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Red-Bay-Visitors-Guide.pdf>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

operates a large campground adjacent to the maintenance facility. This campground, which can accommodate over 90 RVs, enjoys high occupancy year-round.

“They are coming, we should build it.”

While Red Bay is in the enviable position of having a steady stream of overnight visitors, it has struggled to create the services and activities these visitors want during their stays. The small town has an upscale cafe, the Mason Jar, and a coffee house, the Java and Jazz Café, which also serves as a venue for live music. The town also has a small and lovingly maintained local museum, as well as a handful of small shops.

While these establishments are popular, visitors still lack things to do. Recently, some entrepreneurs have responded to this apparent need. For example, a small shop adjacent to the Tiffin campground offers a full range of services for RV visitors. These include RV detailing, car rentals, and even dog grooming.

As in many other Appalachian communities, promoting entrepreneurship can be difficult. While local schools and officials are encouraging entrepreneurship among Red Bay’s youth, resources are still needed to help foster small business growth. Given the level of demand, Red Bay presents an excellent opportunity for an entrepreneurship assistance or mentoring program. Local officials also discussed their desire to expand programs to encourage and increase the number of local businesses owned by women.

Prospering via Partnerships

A strong partnership is helping to expand Red Bay’s future with tourism. Franklin County, the local Chamber

of Commerce, and the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association—along with the city itself—are working together to develop and promote local attractions. They have created a tourism plan and are eager to increase outdoor recreation, especially watersports, fishing, and paddle sports.²⁴

One frustration to many is the county’s restriction on alcohol sales. Franklin County’s status as a “dry county” leads many visitors to go to neighboring counties for alcohol and groceries in one trip, creating significant loss of sales and revenues to neighboring jurisdictions. However, few Red Bay merchants believe the local culture will allow a change in these laws anytime soon.

Promoting a Strong Community

Red Bay and Franklin County are more diverse than many parts of Appalachia. People of color comprise about 5% of the county population. Latinos, who first arrived in the 1980s to work in the poultry industry, make up about 15% of county residents.²⁵

Local officials expressed enthusiasm for diversity and were quick to praise the hard work and entrepreneurship of Hispanic and residents of color. They were especially praiseworthy of Latino youth and expressed excitement over their current and potential contributions. This openness to diversity and sense of welcoming nature should serve the community well as it develops its tourism industry.

²⁴ Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, “Red Bay, Alabama: Turning Assets Into Opportunities.”

²⁵ U.S. Census, “American Fact Finder: Franklin County, Alabama.”





f2

The Tiffin factory tour is a popular activity for local visitors. Some take it multiple times.



f3

The Mason Jar is a popular dining establishment among visitors.



f4

While coffee is available, alcohol sales are illegal in this “dry” county.



f5

Tiffin employs a diverse workforce.

“Red Bay is all about people coming together.” – Local Stakeholder

Tiffin Motorhomes also deserves recognition for its community-friendly policies. The family-owned company boasts a diverse workforce, including many female employees. The typical Tiffin workday runs, unusually, from 6:00 AM until 2:30 PM. The plant’s work schedule is deliberately designed so a parent is home when the school bus arrives.

Lessons Learned

While Red Bay faces an atypical tourism challenge, it offers several important lessons for other small communities. These include the following:

- Red Bay is a great example of industrial tourism, a form of travel where people visit manufacturing facilities. In certain circumstances, local manufacturers can be a low-cost destination for visitors.
- Red Bay shows the importance of partnerships in growing tourism, and also the importance of tapping into available local resources, such as regional tourism agencies.
- RV tourism is a small but lucrative tourism market. RVs, however, require infrastructure like power and water hookups and dump stations. Destinations should consider investing in these assets.
- Red Bay demonstrates the difficulties in promoting small business development. Even in the face of obvious demand, residents are often wary of risk. Various entrepreneurship programs and resources can help allay these fears.

6 Internet, Media, and Social Media Use

The internet may be the biggest technological innovation to impact tourism since the invention of the family car. As disruptive changes go, its influence has been rapid and profound. In just two decades, the internet transformed the way we learned about and planned travel. The introduction of the smartphone in 2007 further accelerated this trend. Today, visitors go online as they travel, share their experiences—both good and bad—in real time, and use their phones to make purchases, navigate, gather information, and translate other languages.

Overall, the use of digital media surpassed the use of traditional information sources, such as printed guides or media.

While the digital age has transformed the visitor experience, it has also created significant opportunities for Appalachian communities. It has never been easier or cheaper for a community or establishment to reach a large audience. At the same time, however, these technologies create new challenges. Negative experiences and thoughtless remarks can have a long-lasting, damaging impact on tourism activity. Because of both these sides to the digital age—the good and

the bad—local tourism officials now find themselves having to develop skills related to, for example, HTML coding and social media marketing strategies. Digital literacy is now a requirement, for both the tourist and the tourism professional.

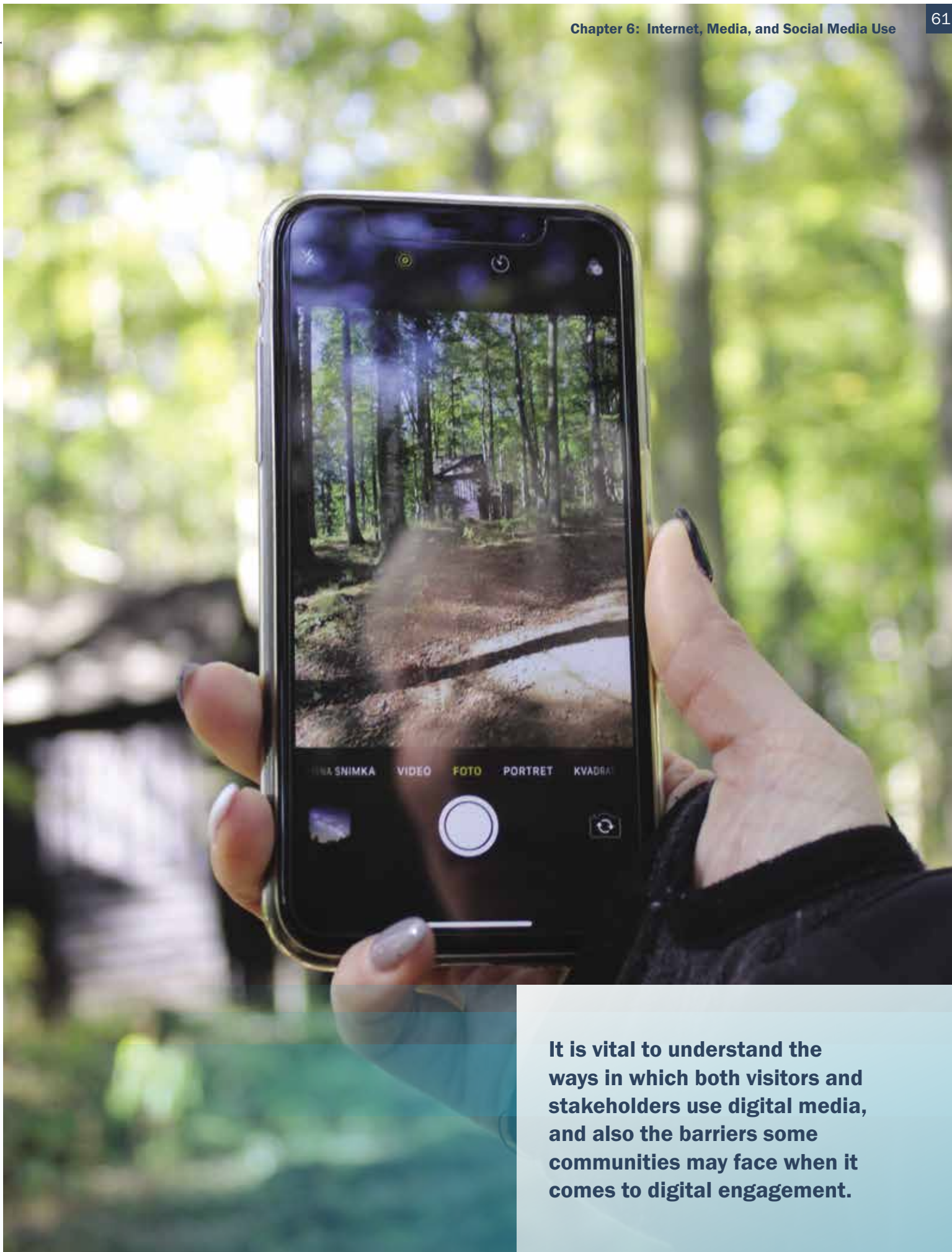
All of this digital progress and potential, however, is predicated on access to a variety of technologies and infrastructure. Unfortunately for Appalachia, the distribution of these resources is not uniform across the Region. Affordable and reliable broadband access and cellular data services are lacking in many areas. Until these services are made available, these communities may grow increasingly removed from the mainstream tourism economy, unable to fully leverage the large number of digital opportunities related to tourism.

The growing emphasis on digital media also lessens the importance of traditional media, such as print or broadcast messaging. However, these channels remain important, particularly among the older segments of the population.

For all these reasons, it is vital to understand the ways in which both visitors and stakeholders use digital media, and also the barriers some communities may face when it comes to digital engagement.

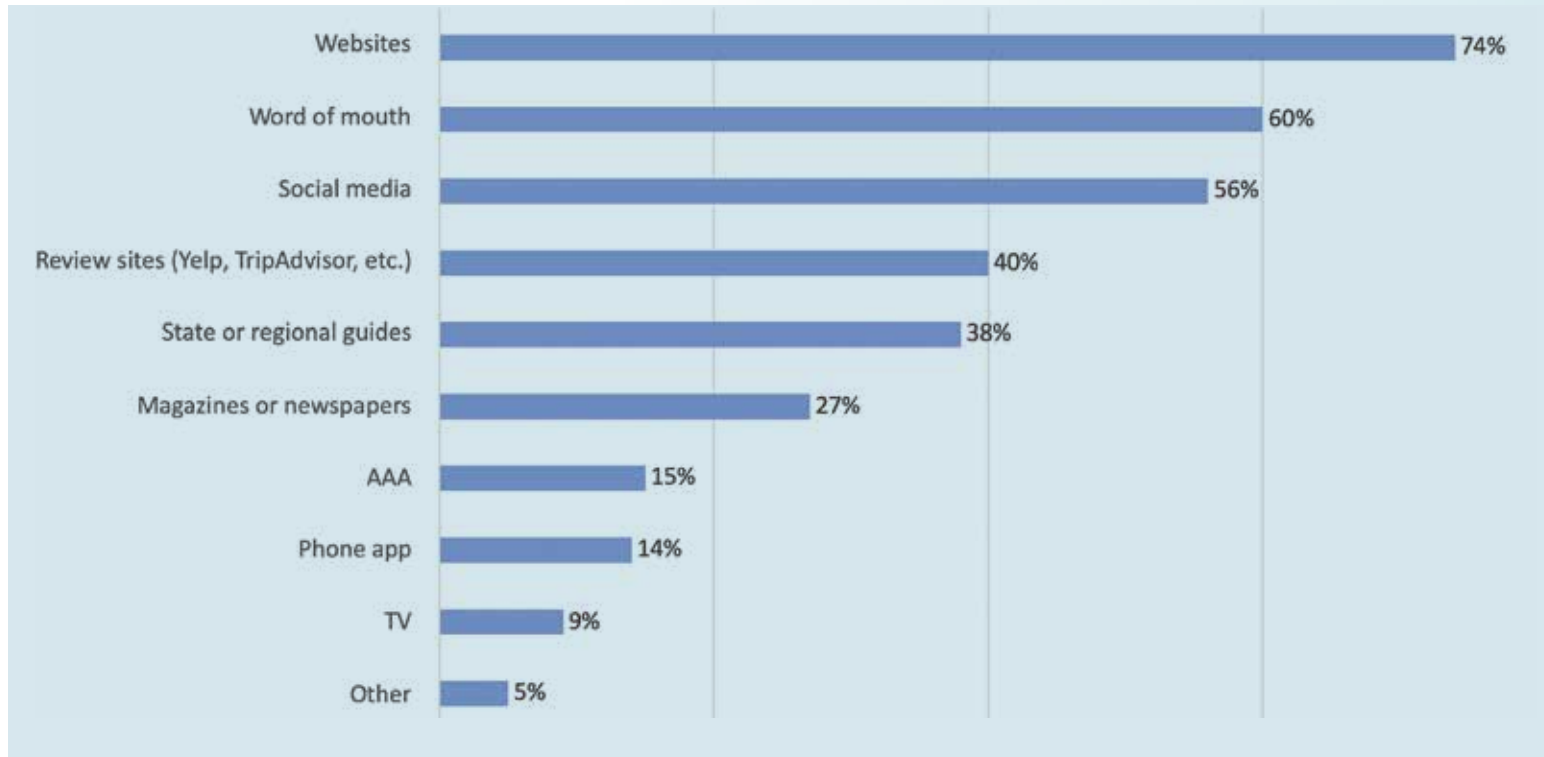
Visitor Media Habits and Preferences

According to survey results, visitors use a variety of resources when planning and preparing for travel. Websites were the most frequently used source of information, followed by word-of-mouth and social media. Review sites, such as TripAdvisor



It is vital to understand the ways in which both visitors and stakeholders use digital media, and also the barriers some communities may face when it comes to digital engagement.

f6.1 Travel Information Sources Used by Survey Participants



and Yelp, also scored high. Overall, the use of digital media surpassed the use of traditional information sources, such as printed guides or media (see Figure 6.1).

Further analysis of this data shows clear distinctions related to media use based on a person's age. Older travelers were much more likely to rely on traditional information sources, such as newspapers, magazines, guidebooks, and radio advertisements (see Figure 6.2). In contrast, younger visitors demonstrated a higher preference for digital media sources. Preferences did not vary significantly by gender, but travelers with higher incomes and/or higher education levels were more likely to utilize digital information resources.

Media preferences did not vary significantly between Appalachian and non-Appalachian travelers. Residents of Appalachia were just as likely to use digital media as nonresidents, if not slightly more so.

Visitors who used the internet to conduct travel research used a variety of social media and review sites, with Facebook being the most popular source of information. Many travelers

also used TripAdvisor, a review site. Other review and social media sites, such as Yelp and Instagram, were also cited.

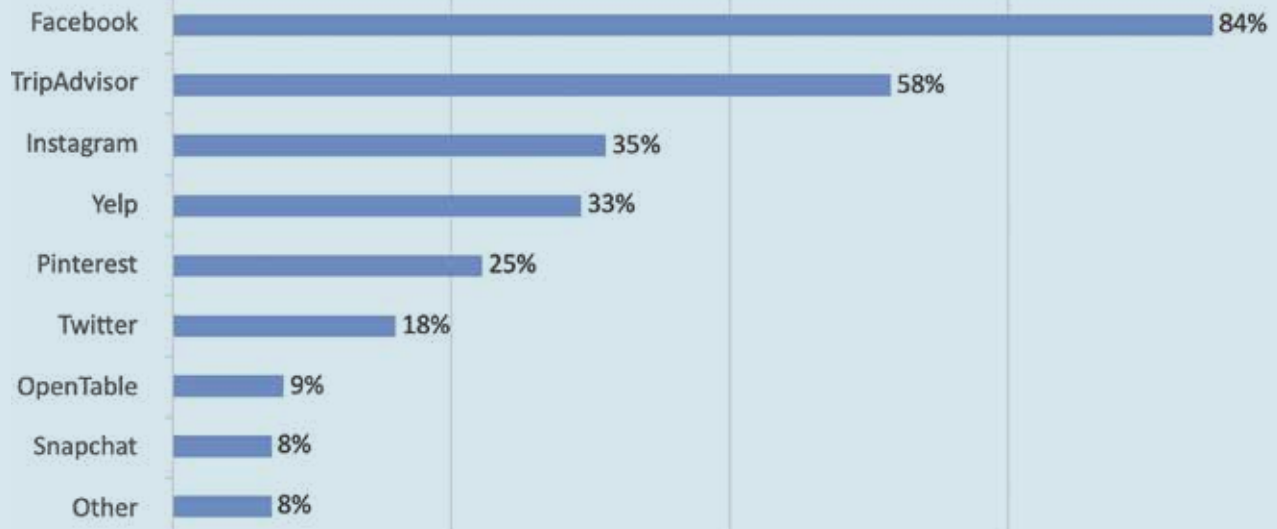
Preferences among these sites varied considerably by age. Younger visitors were far more likely to use Instagram, Snapchat, and Yelp, while older travelers leaned towards TripAdvisor and Facebook. Income and education levels did not demonstrate meaningful differences in preferences.

Visitors used these sites throughout their travel experience. Over three-fourths used them to help plan travel, and more than 70% used them while traveling. Almost a third of visitors posted reviews of sites and vendors after their trip. Less than 7% of visitors did not use digital media at all before, during, or after their travel. As with other digital activities, use of these websites varied by age. Older visitors, in general, were less likely to use these technologies or post reviews.

Stakeholder Media Preferences

Tourism officials and workers in Appalachian communities are using a variety of methods to promote their local tourism resources. While digital media, such as websites and social

f6.2 Social Media and Review Site Preferences Among Survey Participants



media, now dominate marketing methods, traditional tools, such as print and broadcast media, remain important. Many communities use a combination of these. They may, for example, use print media to promote their website or use the internet to distribute print guides.

Larger communities with more resources tended to embrace a wider range of marketing tools. For examples, several counties with populations over 300,000 utilized print, broadcast, and digital media in their tourism outreach efforts. Establishments in these communities were also much more likely to use review sites and regional guides.

On the other hand, smaller communities were much less likely to use all of these avenues, particularly broadcast media and billboards. Instead they relied on internet sites and social media to promote their attractions.

The age of the stakeholder had a minimal impact on media use—though, as expected, older stakeholders were slightly less likely to use social media, and younger users less likely to use print media.

Marketing: Social Media

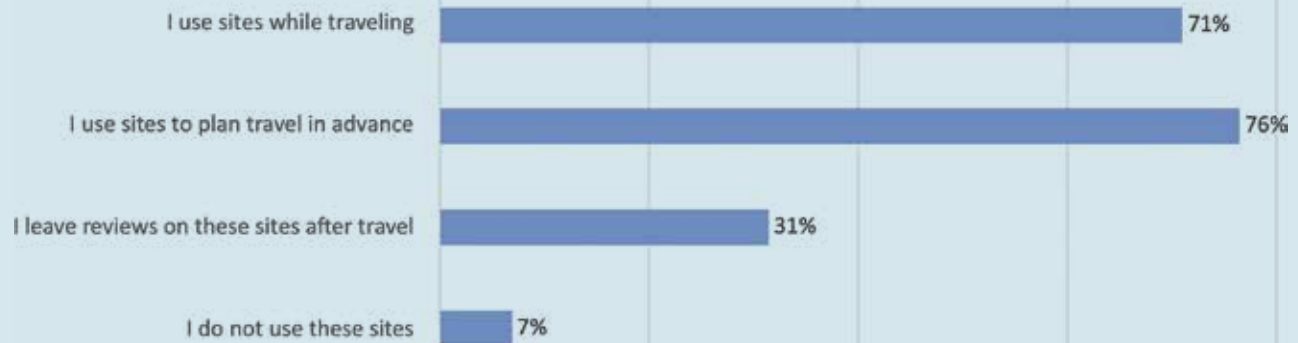
Respondents to the stakeholder survey reported that they utilize a wide range of social media outlets. Facebook was

the most popular platform, but others—such as Instagram and Pinterest—were also used. Review websites were not quite as popular as the social media outlets; about 44% of respondents reported using TripAdvisor, and Yelp. Only a handful of users reported not using social media or review websites (see Figure 6.5).

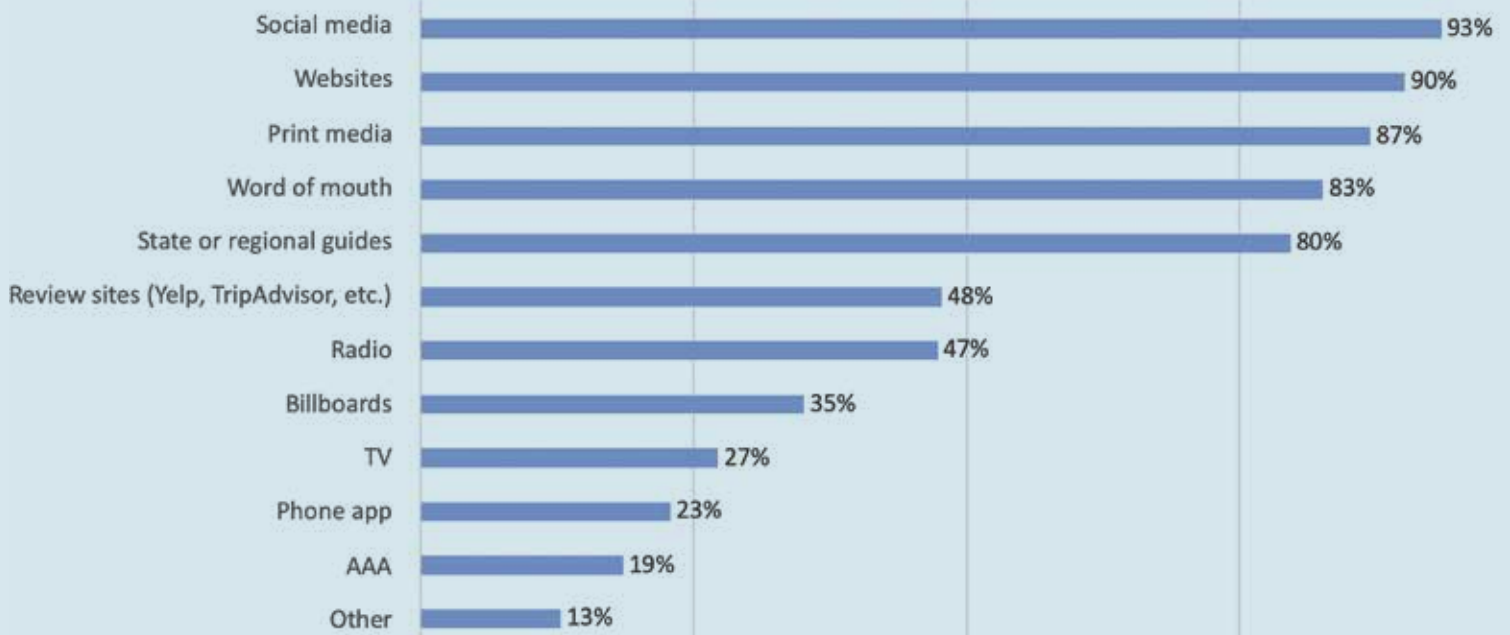
Most respondents appeared to be comfortable using social media and review sites and a majority felt comfortable responding to online reviews. Digital interaction did decline some among respondents over age 65, particularly among respondents 75 or older.

Most respondents appeared to be comfortable using social media and review sites and a majority felt comfortable responding to online reviews.

f6.3 Digital Media Use for Travel



f6.4 Stakeholder Marketing Approaches

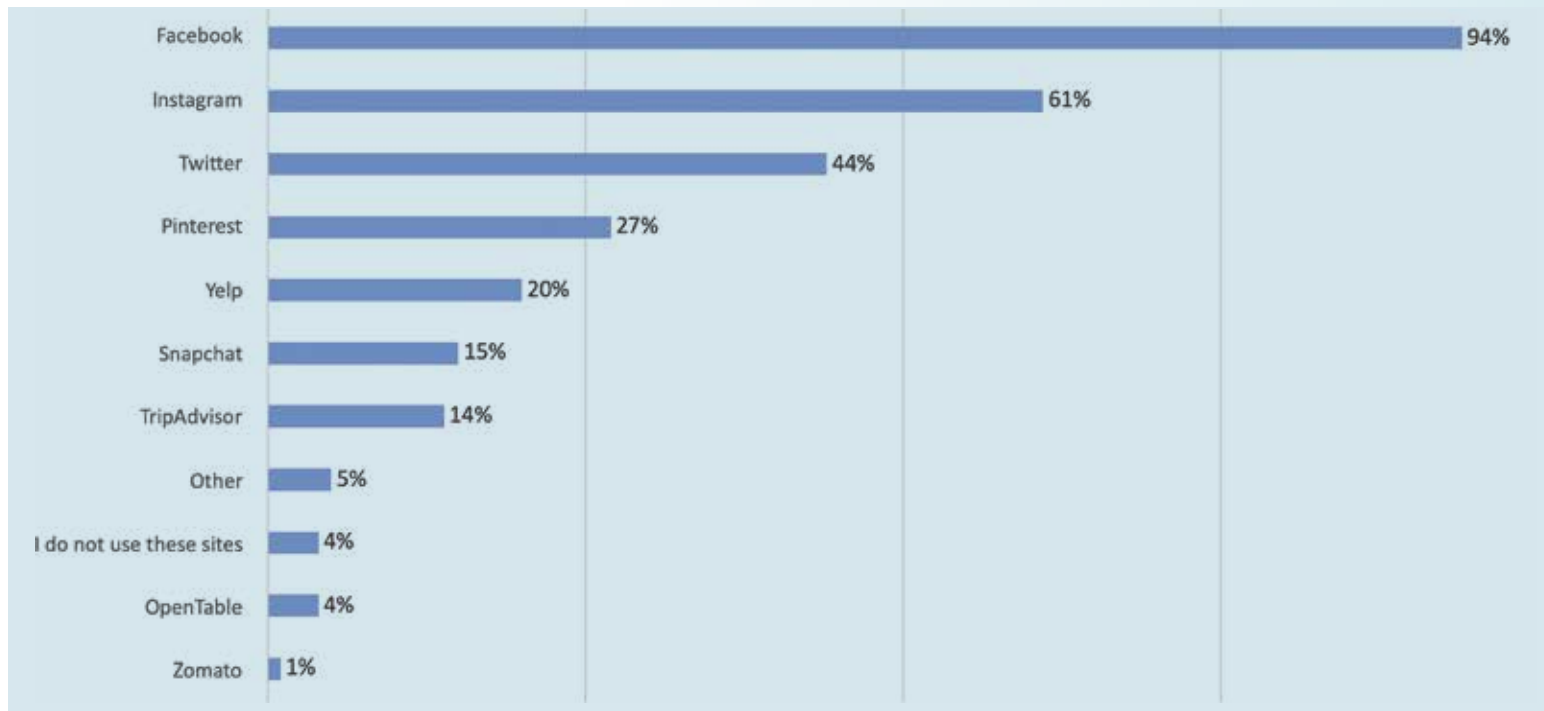


Monitoring and updating social media accounts can become a constant chore for tourism workers, with “We try” being a common response from tourism directors interviewed in the case studies. Some larger communities, such as Boone, North Carolina, maintain full-time social media staff. Meanwhile, smaller communities, such as Williamson, West Virginia, may share a single staff member with the local Chamber of Commerce—and for these workers, social media

maintenance is one of many duties. As a result, updates in these smaller communities may be less frequent or less detailed. They may also focus on one or two platforms, like Facebook and Twitter, and thus potentially miss postings on other review sites and platforms.

While all tourism professionals interviewed as part of the case studies understood the basics of social media, many

f6.5 Social Media Use Among Stakeholder Survey Participants



also expressed interest in improving their skills and expanding their reach, particularly those in smaller communities. Many communities and establishments would benefit from having staff trained in the more advanced features of various platforms, such as data analytics and targeted marketing tools. However, in too many instances, communities and establishments may simply lack the time or funding for such opportunities.

Many tourism officials and other stakeholders from the case studies acknowledged the dangers that also arise from social media platforms. Bad reviews, poor experiences, and ill-advised posts can be disastrous for a community's efforts, especially one with a small or nascent industry. The greatest danger, they felt, was often beyond their control—such as comments made by a private citizen or business owner, or even a public official.

To reduce these risks, public officials and business owners should support and engage in basic training related to social media and online etiquette. Similarly, local tourism directors and staff could also benefit from receiving training in public relations management and communications. Such training would help them respond to issues quickly, and resolve them effectively.

Marketing: Websites

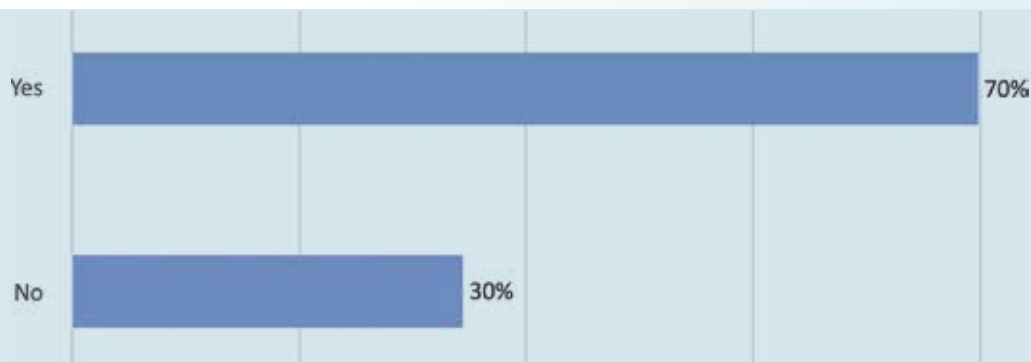
Websites are the most important marketing tool for many communities and businesses. They are a virtual “front window” for destinations, providing a vital link with potential visitors. Given this significance, it is little wonder that many communities make substantial investments in their websites. An additional benefit of doing so is that they create entrepreneurial opportunities for coders and communications firms in the Region.

In recent years, a new trend has emerged in website construction: website development and hosting services that feature readymade templates, allowing novice users to create professional-looking websites at low cost with relative ease. Examples include Wix, Weebly, Wordpress, and GoDaddy. The result has been a sharp increase in website development and visibility, particularly for small businesses and communities.

In many cases, sites can be maintained at a very low cost. A full-fledged website, complete with e-commerce features, can be procured for just \$25 per month from various providers. These sites are often coupled with Google Analytics, a service that provides detailed information about website visitors and their habits, at little to no additional cost.²⁶



Percentage of Participants Responding to an Online Review



Have you ever responded to a review on a social media or review site?

Overall, the rapid democratization of websites has created unprecedented marketing opportunities for Appalachian communities and businesses. This level of exposure, however, creates certain risks, as well. Websites must be constantly monitored and updated. Dead links, outdated announcements, or empty calendars can undermine marketing efforts and turn away prospective visitors. Users who lack the staff or time to vigilantly maintain sites should utilize simple formats that require limited upkeep.

Marketing: Videos

Video production, like website development, has never been easier or less expensive. Technological changes in recent years have dramatically reduced the costs and skill levels needed to produce and distribute professional-level media. A 4K camera and gimbal can be purchased for less than \$1000 combined, and professional editing software is just a few hundred dollars. Aerial footage that once cost thousands can now be acquired using a \$800 drone.

As a result, communities and tourism agencies across the Region are producing more promotional videos than ever before. Unlike conventional commercial ads, which usually run less than a minute, these videos can run for several minutes and include considerable detail. They are often distributed via local tourism websites and through online channels, such as YouTube.

Most have a well-defined theme and highlight local assets and attractions. For example, a video for the town of Abingdon, Virginia is typical of the media produced by Appalachian communities. It highlights noted attractions, such as the Barter Theater, and portrays visitors happily enjoying the community. A video for Mercer County, West Virginia also stands out for its creative and well-defined theme: “Real. Mercer County.” The video highlights local attractions by noting Real Food, Real History, Real Art, and so forth. This theme aligns well with the current trend toward authenticity in tourism destinations.²⁷

Another great video comes from McDowell County, West Virginia. This four-minute video, narrated by local musician Alan “Cathead” Johnston, stands out for several reasons. First, it creates a new, positive narrative for the distressed county. It highlights not only local businesses, but also local business owners. Lastly, it is both welcoming and inclusive, highlighting nonwhite-owned businesses while also portraying a wide range of residents and visitors. Many of the other tourism videos included little diversity in the residents featured.²⁸

Marketing: Print Media

While digital media has become an important marketing channel for many communities, traditional print media remains important. Brochures, rack cards, and visitor guides continue to play a significant role in many communities’ marketing portfolios. Several factors contribute to the

²⁶ Websites were analyzed using Builtwith.com; <https://www.weebly.com/pricing>.

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4TzoVvNqsl>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlilO40mouw>.

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxPQtfjQyxY&t=85s>



Pikeville's Blue Raven Restaurant (left) and Point Pleasant's Mothman Festival (right) both use the Weebly service to create low-cost, professional looking websites.



The theme of the Mercer County, West Virginia's tourism video helps define it as an authentic destination.



The McDowell County, West Virginia, promotional video is notable for both its production quality and its inclusiveness. It should serve as a model for other small communities in the Region.



The Pikeville Kentucky Visitor's Guide includes both historical and contemporary portrayals of a diversity in residents, visitors, and artists.

persistence of print media, including the durable nature of the product, established distribution networks (i.e., visitor centers, welcome centers, and lobby displays), and the ability to reach audiences that don't as frequently engage with digital media, such as senior travelers.

Current perceptions of digital media may even lead to a revival of printed materials. Tourism officials in Erwin, Tennessee, for example, have seen a recent upsurge in requests for visitor guides and tourism magazines. They reported distributing 10,000 magazines in three months, and 50,000 guides in a nine-month period. As one official explained: "I think there is more interest in hard copy media because people are so frustrated by what they're seeing online, with the fake news and such."

While these materials remain popular, they have clear disadvantages when compared to digital media. They are

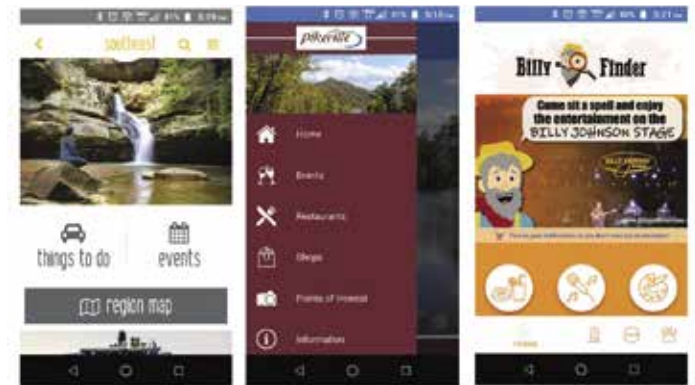
Since the first iPhone was released in 2007, smartphone apps have emerged as a tourism marketing tool for many communities.

costly to produce and distribute, difficult to update, less timely, and they also have a larger environmental impact. In nearly all cases, they contribute to litter and waste issues at tourism sites. For these reasons, some places have begun moving away from print materials; this is especially true among smaller communities and establishments promoting sustainability.

As with promotional videos, inclusiveness and a lack of diversity are also common issues. Many brochures and printed guides show few nonwhite visitors or residents. Pikeville, Kentucky, in contrast, included both historical and contemporary African-American representation in its printed visitors' guide.²⁹

²⁹ <https://www.visitnc.com/things-to-do>; https://www.visitpikeville.com/sites/all/themes/bootstrap_default/images/tourism-guide.pdf.

While tourism app use is far from universal, several large and mid-size tourism markets have developed apps to attract and assist visitors.



f6.11

Smartphone apps can help promote local sites and events. Tourism Ohio's app, left, includes a detailed guide to the state's Appalachian counties. Visit Pikeville (center) and BillyFinder (right) are excellent examples of a community using local resources and talent to promote areas attractions.

Marketing: Smartphone Apps

Since the first iPhone was released in 2007, smartphone apps have emerged as a tourism marketing tool for many communities. While tourism app use is far from universal, several large and mid-size tourism markets have developed apps to attract and assist visitors. Tourism apps fall into three basic categories:

- Destination apps highlight tourism resources in a community, park, venue, or neighborhood.
- Festival apps note resources, vendors, and activities at festivals or other large events.
- Trail apps guide visitors along themed trails and note attractions and businesses along the route. These will be discussed later in a section on Arts and Heritage Trails.

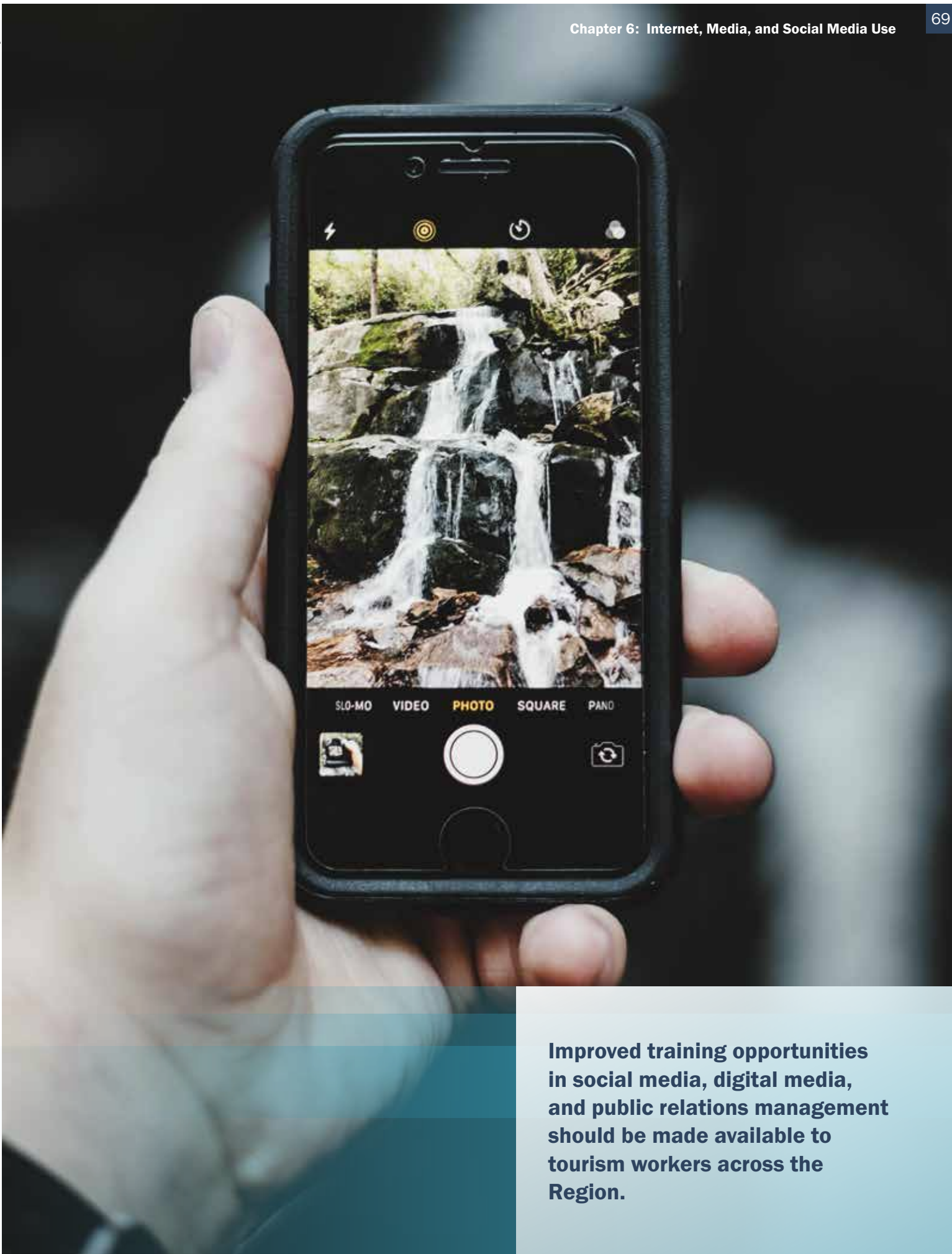
Destination apps exist at different levels. Tourism Ohio, for example, is a statewide app with detailed information for subregions across the entire state, including Ohio's Appalachian counties. The app includes maps of local attractions, restaurant and hotel guides, and a calendar of current and upcoming events.

A few smaller communities have also developed apps. One example of such a community is Pikeville, Kentucky, which created a pair of phone apps. The visitor guide app—which was created by Bitsource, a local company—has information about lodging, dining, and local points of interest. Pikeville also boasts an events app, BillyFinder, that promotes and supports its annual Hillbilly Days Festival. This colorful and creative app, also developed locally, includes a guide to festival facilities and vendors, information about the community, history about the event, and a game for “hunting” bear statues located across the festival site.³⁰

Conclusion

Today's visitors are the most informed travelers in history. They have free and easy access to unprecedented amounts of information, including reviews and suggestions from other travelers. This phenomenon, made possible by technological advancements, creates new opportunities for communities to promote themselves, as well as additional avenues for communication. However, these changes also create new risks. Local stakeholders need the skills to navigate these new areas, and they must quickly respond to issues as they arise. Given these needs, improved training opportunities in social media, digital media, and public relations management should be made available to tourism workers across the Region.

³⁰ Apps and app information are from the Google Play Store.



Improved training opportunities in social media, digital media, and public relations management should be made available to tourism workers across the Region.

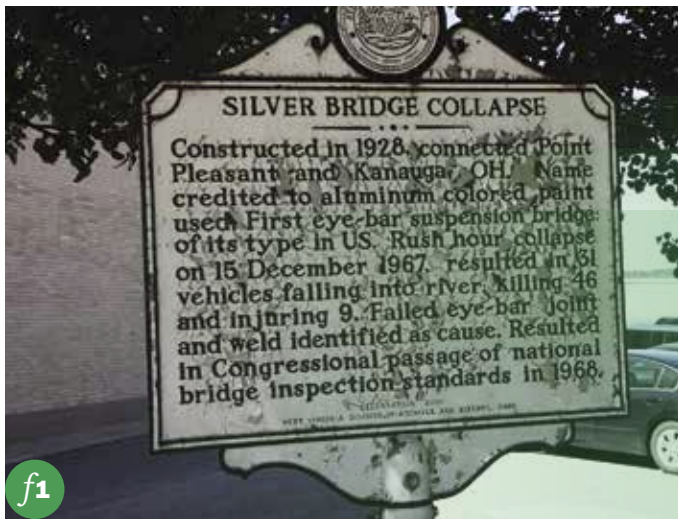
Case Study: Point Pleasant, West Virginia

Small towns and communities often have urban legends or local lore that include amazing and unexplained phenomena. Point Pleasant is home to one such story, one that has deep roots in the Region—the Mothman.

The origin of the Mothman, reported sightings, and theories surrounding Mothman’s “intent” have given rise to an annual festival and other business opportunities, making Point Pleasant a very unique destination in the Region.

Mothman Statue, a 12-foot statue ensconced in the middle of the main street, was designed and built by a local artisan and sculptor, Bob Roach.





The historic marker for the Silver Bridge Collapse in Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

Mothman's Origin Story

The origination and intentions of the creature—a man with giant wings, essentially—are shrouded in mystery and are a source of much speculation. Sightings were first reported in 1966; the very first sighting was reported on November 12, by five men digging a grave in nearby Clendenin, West Virginia.³¹ Three days later, on November 15, two couples were parked in an area known as the “TNT area,” a former World War II munitions site in Point Pleasant. They reported to police that, around midnight, they saw a large grey creature whose eyes “glowed red” when the car’s headlights shone on it. This “large flying man with ten-foot wings” followed their car back to town. “It was like a man with wings. It wasn’t like anything you’d see on TV or in a movie.”³²

There were many additional reports of the Mothman in the area, though the last sighting was on December 16, 1967. On this day, an engineering disaster claimed the lives of 46 people when the Silver Bridge, spanning the Ohio River from Point Pleasant to Gallipolis, Ohio, collapsed. The subsequent investigation of the wreckage blamed the collapse on the failure of a single eye-bar in a suspension chain, due to a small defect only one-tenth of an inch deep, an important finding which led to changes in bridge design and inspections.³³ Some residents claimed that Mothman was trying to warn the residents away from the bridge and the impending tragedy.

³² “Couples See Man-Sized Bird...Creature...Something”. *Point Pleasant Register*, November 16, 1966. WestVA.Net, Mark Turner. Archived from the original on 11 October 2007. Accessed at <http://www.westva.net/mothman/1966-11-16.htm>.

³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Bridge

Point Pleasant, West Virginia



COUNTY FACTS

County	Mason
Population (2017) ¹	26,801
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$20,258
Three-Year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	7.5%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	19.3%
ARC status (2020) ²	At-Risk

CITY FACTS

Founded (Point Pleasant) ³	1794
Miles to interstate (I-77) ⁴	29
Miles to state capitol (Charleston, WV) ⁴	55
Miles to nearest metro area (Huntington, WV) ⁴	35
Miles to nearest commercial airport (Yeager Airport, Charleston) ⁴	60

SOURCES

¹ “The Appalachian Region.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² “Socioeconomic Data.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ “Point Pleasant, West Virginia.” Accessed at <https://wvexplorer.com/communities/cities-towns/point-pleasant-west-virginia/>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

Mothman's Popularity

In 1975, author John A. Keel told the story of the 1966 visions in his book, *The Mothman Prophecies*, which later became a movie in 2002 starring Richard Gere. Keel introduced the mystery of the Mothman and Point Pleasant to a new generation of curious onlookers from across the globe.

With heightened public interest from the movie's success, local opportunities to promote the Mothman legend began in earnest. Local residents and business owners, including Jeff Walmsley (owner of Criminal Records) and Carolyn Harris (owner of Harris Diner) hosted the first festival celebrating the Mothman mystery in 2002.

This free, annual event draws thousands of attendees and significant funds to the region. Organized by a volunteer staff, the festival includes vendors, outdoor activities, bus tours of the TNT area, Mothman-themed food, guest speakers, and films. A scenic Mothman 5K racecourse traverses the city along the banks of the Ohio River. In 2018, the festival drew a record-breaking crowd of approximately 12,000 attendees, in part due to the release of a popular video game that featured Point Pleasant, the Mothman, and other West Virginia cryptids.

In 2003, CBS news crews came to Point Pleasant to cover the dedication of the Mothman Statue, a 12-foot statue ensconced in the middle of the main street. The statue was designed and built by a local artisan and sculptor, Bob Roach. More than 200 people attended the statue's dedication, which has become a popular location for visitors to take selfies, and a 24-hour "Mothcam" is now available online.³⁴

In 2005, Jeff Walmsley opened the Mothman Museum and Research Center in a storefront in downtown Point Pleasant. The museum houses an impressive collection of materials and official records related to the Mothman, the TNT area, and theories about the creature. The museum also hosts the popular Mothcam, and the gift shop has an extensive variety of Mothman souvenirs, T-shirts, and books about the area. These gifts can also be purchased through a nicely designed website.

The Mothman story has an international following amongst lovers of folklore and devotees of cryptozoology. His legend is told in video games, movies, and other museums:

- Fallout 76, a popular video game franchise, featured a

post-apocalyptic Appalachia and Point Pleasant in its 2018 release;

- More than 40 movies and television series featuring the Mothman story have been filmed since 2002;
- The Monster Museum, in Tokyo, Japan, added a statue of the Mothman to its display.

Beyond Mothman

While Point Pleasant enjoys fame as the home of the Mothman legend, it offers other assets and opportunities for tourists. It is only 29 miles from the nearest interstate, making it easily accessible via WV2 and US35. As such, Point Pleasant is an easy destination from cities such as Huntington and Charleston, West Virginia, as well as Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio.

Point Pleasant also has several parks, facilities, and natural assets that could be popular tourist draws. These include:

- The Tu-Endie-Wei State Park is located at the confluence of the Kanawha and Ohio rivers. The Riverfront park offers historical murals with interpretive audio features and statues as well as a 1,000-seat riverfront amphitheater.
- The Kanawha and Ohio Rivers offer boating opportunities. In addition, every July, Point Pleasant hosts the Sternwheel Regatta.
- Fort Randolph is located just east of town at Krodel Park.
- The largest high school sports and athletic complex in West Virginia is in Point Pleasant.
- The "TNT area," apart from its connection to the Mothman legend, played a fascinating role in the United States' efforts during World War II.

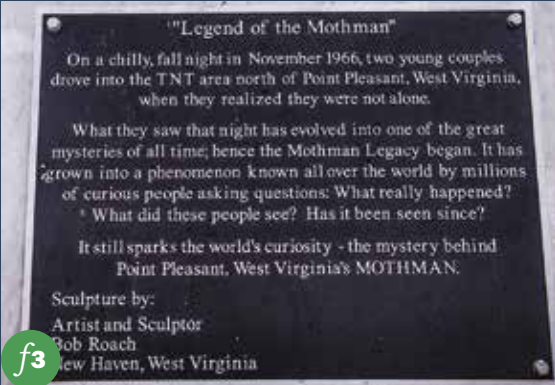
The Threats of Popularity

The huge success of the 2018 festival, which included the cross-promotion of the Fallout 76 game launch later in the year, highlighted some areas for improvement. While some of the issues observed are unique to the festival weekend, other issues present opportunities that will allow Point Pleasant to expand its draw as a tourism destination year-round.

³⁴ <https://www.mothmanmuseum.com/mothcam.html>



Attendees to the 2018 Mothman Festival meet the Mothman.



The Mothman Statue celebrates the mysterious creature seen by many between November 12, 1966 and December 16, 1967.



The Mothman Museum opened in 2006, providing 75–100 guests per day a place to learn more about the history of the Mothman as well as to purchase souvenirs.



A film crew from Asia conducting interviews at the 2018 Mothman Festival.

“Don’t try to be another community, be uniquely you.” – Local Stakeholder

The sheer volume of attendees in 2018 demonstrated festival planning issues deserving of consideration. The 12,000 attendees, roughly three times the typical population of Point Pleasant, provided insights for festival planning and public safety for instances in which a festival is relatively large in comparison to its host community. Such issues include:

- Vehicle traffic volume—An influx of personal vehicles, as well as vehicles for vendors, service providers, and emergency personnel, must be carefully considered. Are there other ways to direct traffic and reduce congestion? Possible options could include expanded shuttle service from satellite parking lots, hotels, and public parks.
- Pedestrian volume—A typical downtown festival has attendees coming in and out of storefronts, roaming around tents on both sides of the street, and usually streaming down the center of a road. Safety measures for foot traffic are critical. Considerations should include emergency vehicle access, covering of electrical cables and other trip hazards, and barriers to reduce the likelihood of climbing or hanging on taller objects.
- Placement of first-aid stations—Significant thought should be given to the placement and number of first-aid stations for any public event. They should be highly visible, well-staffed, and quickly accessible for an attendee or festival staff member.
- Adequate public restrooms or portable toilet facilities—Restroom facilities need to be plentiful and well-maintained throughout the event. If the festival is a multi-day event, any contract for portable toilets should include

the potential to rent additional facilities to accommodate larger-than-anticipated crowds.

In addition to public access and safety issues specific to the Mothman Festival weekend, there are a few broader issues that hamper Point Pleasant's ability to fully benefit from tourism.

One notable issue is the lack of lodging in Point Pleasant. There is one historic hotel, the Lowe Hotel, on Main Street. Originally built in 1901, it has been beautifully renovated and is a charming lodging option. However, it is the lone lodging option in town. During the Mothman Festival and other large events, most tourists go across the river for lodging in Gallipolis, Ohio—or even further, to Huntington. This robs Point Pleasant of substantial lodging funds and associated tax revenues, in addition to lodgers potentially buying food and gas closer to their hotels. The community should consider options for additional, creative lodging spaces. One route is by creating partnerships with specific bed-and-breakfasts and Airbnb partners that can be trained to be community or event ambassadors; in exchange, these hosts could include a modest surcharge that could be remitted to the town to help promote not only their lodging, but also the town.

During focus group sessions, residents voiced other concerns impacting tourism. Many of these issues are not unique to Point Pleasant, and have been highlighted in this report, including the following:

- Some storefronts are in need of repair, creating an eyesore to the community; some property owners do not live locally nor adequately care for their buildings.
- More collaboration is needed between the city and the county leadership when it comes to promoting tourism.
- The lack of access to capital makes property improvements difficult.
- The marketing budget is very limited.
- There is a shortage of workers, due in part to the opioid epidemic.
- There is limited access to broadband services, especially downtown.



f6

Potential trip hazards.



f7

The Mothman Festival provides opportunities for creative food promotion.



f8

Mothman Festival souvenirs provide opportunities for thematic marketing.

Next Steps

Despite these challenges, there is significant potential for expanded tourism in Point Pleasant and optimism locally to work toward becoming a more widely known tourism destination. The following opportunities may be worthy of consideration:

- Connect tourism events and local attractions to promote Point Pleasant as a year-round destination.
- Consider the creation of “Cryptid Trail” in West Virginia, including Mothman and the Flatwoods Monster, or even across a broader stretch of the Appalachian Region, which could also include the Sheepsquatch, the Wampus Cat, and Snallygaster.
- Reach out to area schools regarding their heritage to encourage field trips.
- Promote the area for sternwheelers and historic bus tours, particularly through travel networks for retirees.
- Tap into tourism related to hunting, one of the largest attractions in the state.
- Continue to build momentum for kayaking and canoeing on the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers.
- Explore moderate terrain biking and ATV opportunities to attract younger individuals to the community.
- Use social media to promote the community and attract visitors.
- Encourage and listen to the next generation of leaders.
- Continue to build relationship and increase collaboration across local agencies and leaders.
- Focus on the development of entrepreneurs and new businesses to diversify the economy.

Understanding and accepting these opportunities and challenges will be helpful to the community as they work towards realizing its immense potential. Residents of Point Pleasant voiced their belief in the importance of other communities to recognizing what makes them unique and

Folklore and culture do not have to be conventional in order to attract visitors. As the Mothman proves, the unusual can sometimes be more appealing than the “normal.”

emphasizing that. Indeed, Point Pleasant has a heritage that is not only unique, including Mothman and beyond, but it’s also worth celebrating as they move forward, using local assets to their fullest advantage.

Lessons Learned

While the Mothman may be one of the most unusual attractions in Appalachia, his (or her) legacy has many lessons to offer other communities. These include the following:

- Folklore and culture do not have to be conventional in order to attract visitors. As the Mothman proves, the unusual can sometimes be more appealing than the “normal.”
- As the Mothman Festival demonstrates, success is not the final destination. It is, instead, a graduation—a point when a community “moves up” to the next level. Usually, this new level is one with greater challenges, increased competition, and the potential for higher rewards.
- The Mothman Festival owes its success not only to the uniqueness of its theme, but also to the welcoming environment it creates. The research team was struck by the atmosphere at the festival and the wide range of attendees. It is proof that Appalachian hospitality is not just a virtue, it is also good business.

7 Creating Quality Tourism Services

“We need to develop a strategy that provides a better, higher-quality experience—not just more experiences.”

– Stakeholder survey comment

This remark by a local tourism director illustrates one of the main issues confronting Appalachian communities—the pursuit of quality experiences. The Region has been blessed with unparalleled natural assets: stunning scenery, abundant wildlife, and a wide range of lakes, rivers, and waterways.

Travelers are often very selective about their lodging preferences, and a lack of adequate lodging can be a major barrier to tourism in some communities.

Likewise, Appalachian communities offer a broad range of cultural, artistic, and historic resources; a diversity in local food and drink; and friendly and welcoming residents.

However, many of the Region’s facilities and infrastructure related to tourism do not achieve the same standard of

quality. While some parts of Appalachia certainly offer world-class lodging, dining, and infrastructure, other areas may lack adequate facilities. This is especially true in many of the smaller, rural, and economically distressed areas, which may lack even basic services and amenities. In some areas, isolation, lack of access to capital, low levels of entrepreneurship, and low capacity further compound these issues.

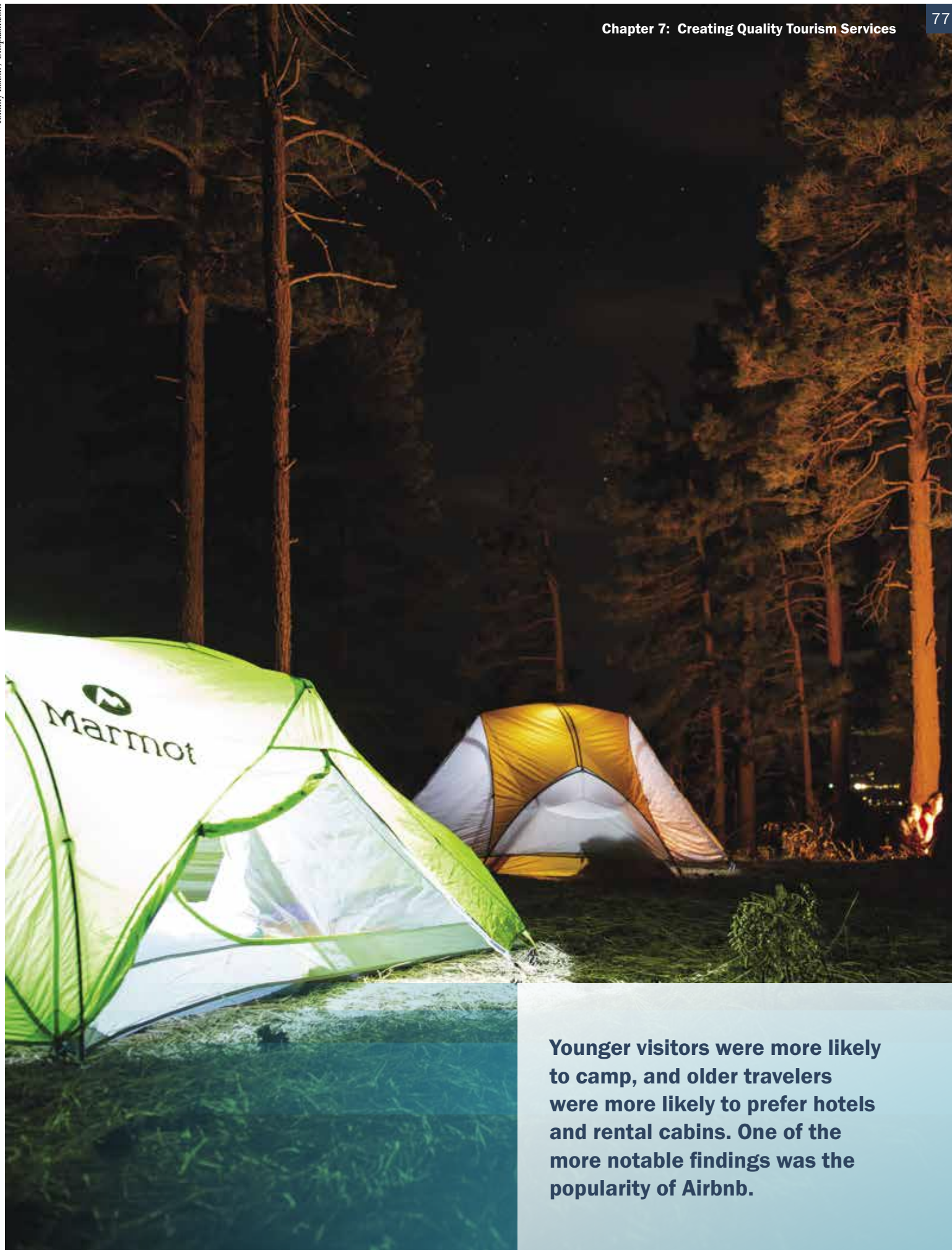
“Infrastructure is a big issue for us—hotels, motels, restaurants—even adequate public restrooms.”

– Stakeholder survey comment

Recent developments in the tourism industry may create new opportunities for Appalachian communities and entrepreneurs. Services such as Airbnb and Uber can help fill service gaps in some areas, and new trends—such as local food and microbreweries—create new small business opportunities. However, these growth areas are still heavily dependent on infrastructure, including everything from roadways to affordable broadband.

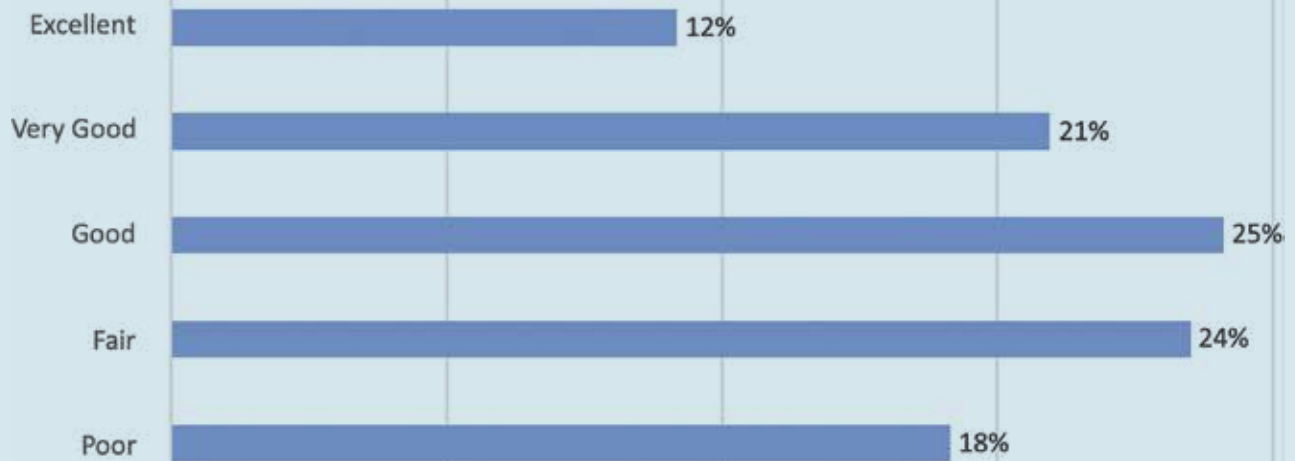
Lodging

Lodging is one of the most important elements in a community’s tourism portfolio. It is a place of rest at a time of rest, an escape from the escape of a vacation. It is also a place where travelers can feel either secure or vulnerable—perhaps simultaneously—as they sleep in a strange place surrounded by strangers. For these reasons, travelers are often very selective about their lodging preferences, and a lack of adequate lodging can be a major barrier to tourism in some communities.

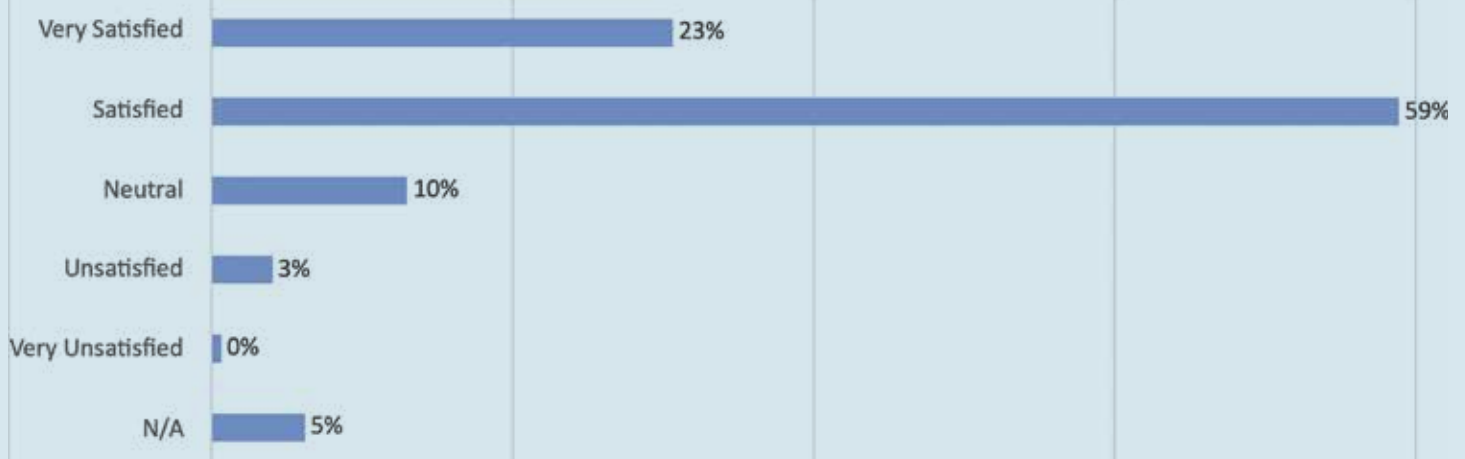


Younger visitors were more likely to camp, and older travelers were more likely to prefer hotels and rental cabins. One of the more notable findings was the popularity of Airbnb.

f7.1 Stakeholder Ratings of Local Lodging



f7.2 Visitor Satisfaction, Lodging

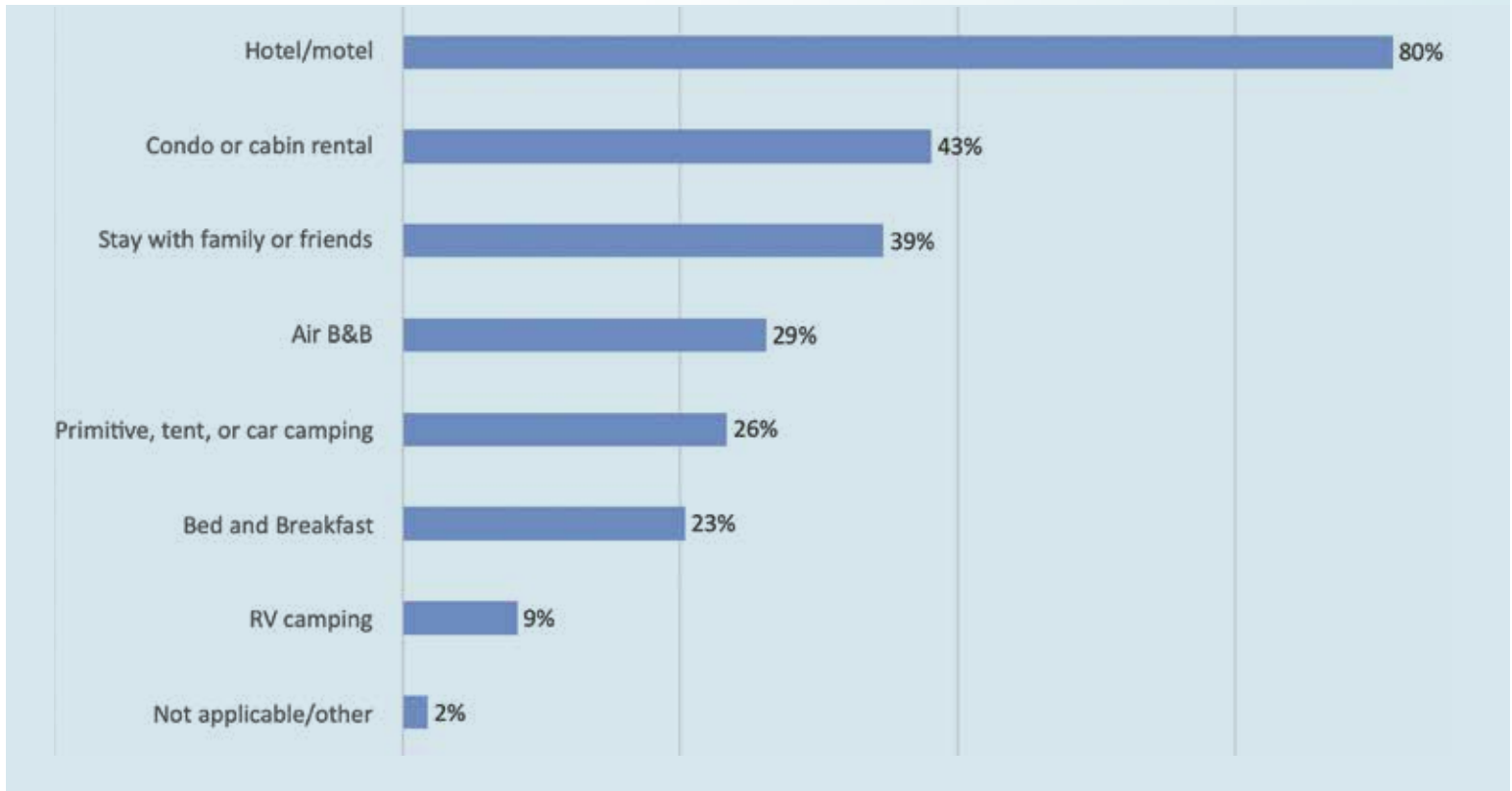


Responses to the stakeholder survey reflected the importance of good lodging, and also the concerns many have about the lack of quality hotels in some areas. Less than 12% of respondents rated their local lodging facilities as “excellent,” and 18% rated them as “poor.” However, as seen in Figure 7.1, most stakeholders rated their local hotels and other lodging providers as either “fair” or “good.” When asked about local barriers to tourism development, stakeholders identified lodging issues as their top concern.

“We have an excellent mix of museums and music attractions; however, we have only limited service hotel properties...tens of thousands of our visitors choose to stay in the adjoining county as we are literally, geographically located together, which makes it hard for our visitors to differentiate between our counties. In other words, we have the attractions; they have the better accommodations so our visitors stay primarily in the adjoining county.”

– Stakeholder survey comment

f7.3 Lodging preferences among Appalachian visitors



For their part, visitors were generally pleased with their lodging experiences. Eighty-two percent of visitors were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the lodging during their trips. Only about 3% of respondents were “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied” with lodging during their travel.

Visitors reported utilizing a wide range of lodging options during their travel. These include traditional options like hotels and motels; more adventurous options, such as tent and RV camping; and short-term rentals, such as Airbnb units. Hotels remain the most popular option, with 80% of respondents using them. Other types of accommodations also proved popular. Cabin and/or condo rentals were used by about 43% of participants, and 39% sometimes stayed with friends or relatives.³⁵

Lodging preferences by age were fairly predictable. Younger visitors were more likely to camp, and older travelers were more likely to prefer hotels and rental cabins. One of the more notable findings was the popularity of Airbnb, which

didn’t even exist until 2008. The service, just over a decade old, has quickly become one of the most popular lodging options, particularly among younger travelers. A recent study found that over half of all Airbnb users are between the ages of 18 and 34.³⁶ The visitor survey indicated a similar trend in Appalachia, with younger travelers showing a strong preference for the service; overall, across all age groups, just under 30% of respondents reported using Airbnb.

The popularity of Airbnb rentals has not only created a new lodging option for travelers, it has also become an entrepreneurial opportunity for residents throughout Appalachia. For example, in Coudersport, Pennsylvania,

³⁵ It is important to note that this question—and other similar questions—do not limit the respondents to answer based only on their current trips. Instead, questions were framed in order to elicit insights regarding the travelers’ general preferences when traveling.

³⁶ Morgan Stanley. *Share of Airbnb users by age group in the United States and Europe 2017*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/796646/airbnb-users-by-age-us-europe/> (accessed 5/7/19, 8:31 PM).



though there are no chain hotels, a wide range of Airbnb accommodations are available as lodging options, including a small downtown hotel.³⁷

Airbnb rentals can be a significant source of income for property owners. The average monthly income for Airbnb operators is \$924 per month, which is much more than operators with other shared-economy services. Uber drivers, in contrast, earn an average of \$364 per month. Yet while

average Airbnb earnings are quite high, the distribution indicates that this may be influenced by several high-earning properties. According to the Morgan Stanley report on Airbnb, 38% of properties earn between \$100 and \$499 per month; 22% earn between \$500 and \$999 per month; and 26% of properties garner more than \$1,000 each month.³⁸

The significance of the short-term rental services should not be underestimated. Even modest incomes can make a big difference for rural families. The service also creates new and accessible lodging alternatives for areas with few options. Equally important, it also provides small-scale providers with two important and affordable services: an online registration system and fast and efficient payments.

Given the rising popularity of Airbnb and similar services, the number of short-term rental properties will likely increase across the Region. While this increase will benefit many communities, it will also create new issues and liabilities. If not properly managed, short-term rentals can disrupt neighborhoods and create risks related to safety and privacy. As a result, many communities are now amending local codes to regulate short-term rentals, establishing safety standards

³⁷ As of August 2019.

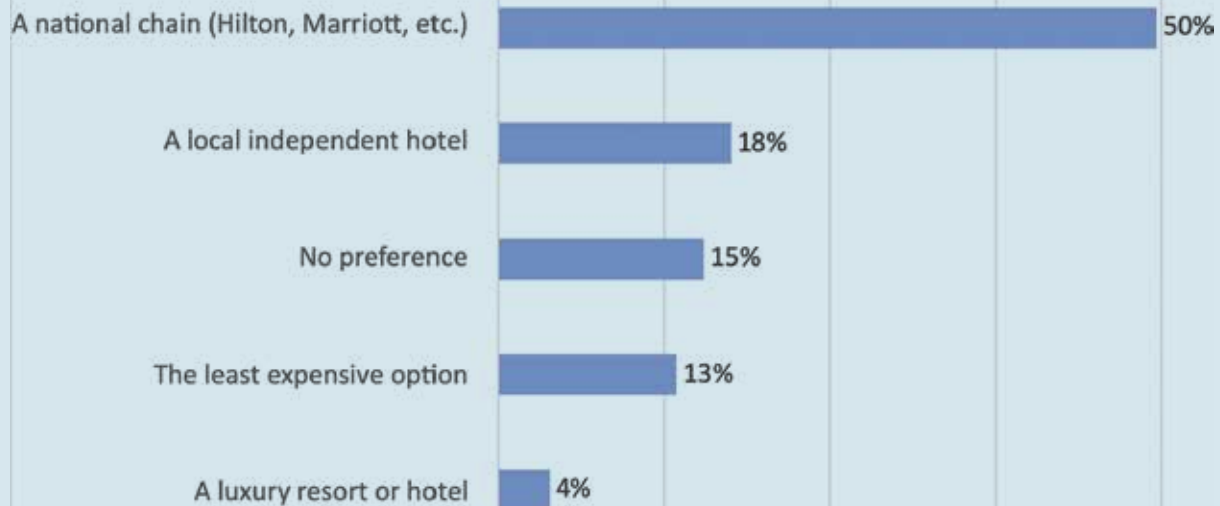


f7.4

Appalachian Airbnb rentals range from camper hook-ups to downtown lofts and waterfront cabins. Images from Airbnb.com.

³⁸ Morgan Stanley, *Share of Airbnb*.

f7.5 Hotel Preferences among survey participants



for the units and prohibiting discriminatory practices. This is usually accomplished through local zoning regulations, which can also be used to confine short-term rentals to certain areas, or even prohibit them altogether.³⁹

Some smaller Appalachian communities, however, lack the capacity to develop and enforce these codes. In some cases, short-term rental properties are located outside of jurisdictional boundaries, which means in some cases that it falls on county-level governments to regulate these properties. In most cases, Airbnb collects appropriate lodging taxes on behalf of state and local governments.⁴⁰

While Airbnb and similar services are growing in popularity, hotels remain the most popular lodging option for visitors to the Region. Visitors expressed a strong preference for hotels associated with national chains, such as Hilton or Marriott. A smaller number of respondents expressed a preference for

³⁹ Daniel Guttentag. (2015) *Airbnb: disruptive innovation and the rise of an informal tourism accommodation sector*. *Current Issues in Tourism* 18:12, pages 1192-1217.

⁴⁰ Currently, Airbnb is not collecting taxes from properties in West Virginia. The state is currently developing legislation to collect these revenues. Matthew Umstead, "Legislation aims to net lodging tax from thousands of Airbnb guests in Eastern Panhandle," *Hagerstown Herald-Mail*, March 2, 2019.



f7.6

Historic downtown hotels, like Point Pleasant's Lowe (left), Coudersport's Crittenden (center) and Williamson's Mountaineer (right) provide an important service and help community revitalization efforts.

local independent properties (see Figure 7.5).

A number of factors contribute to the preference for chain establishments. Predictability, perceptions of safety, cleanliness standards, and loyalty programs all play a role. Access to amenities and technology, such as wireless access, are also factors. Location may also play a role, as chain hotels are typically located in larger communities, near interstates and other transportation hubs.

While visitors preferred to stay in hotels located near



As a member of the Historic Hotels of America, the Boone Tavern benefits from the program's branding, marketing, and reservations system.

While visitors preferred to stay in hotels located near interstate exits, they also expressed a strong preference for visiting local attractions and businesses away from the interstate.

interstate exits, they also expressed a strong preference (76%) for visiting local attractions and businesses away from the interstate. This finding may suggest that travelers who visit smaller rural communities frequently spend the night elsewhere. Comments made by stakeholders in both the survey and site visits seem to give credence to this trend, as well. One small-town tourism director lamented: “We have the attractions, they have the better accommodations.”

This phenomenon is the source of some frustration among many tourism officials in rural areas. Visitors come to their communities to enjoy their local attractions, but the tax revenues from lodging wind up going to nearby communities with an interstate exit. The fact that lodging taxes often fund tourism offices compounds the issue. It may be little wonder, then, why many local tourism directors work so hard to secure at least one chain hotel in their communities.

Visitors want to explore authentic local foods using local products and ingredients. Chain restaurants, however, dilute or deter efforts towards authenticity in some areas.

For some communities, historic local hotels provide another lodging option for travelers. Several communities visited as part of the case studies included throughout this report—Williamson, Berea, Point Pleasant, Marietta, and Coudersport—boast historic independent hotels. These establishments provide vital services in these communities while also playing an important role in downtown vitality. In many cases, these hotels are able to provide online reservations, either through their websites or, as in the case of Coudersport's Hotel Crittenden, through Airbnb.

While the region boasts a growing number of historic downtown hotels, only a modest number of these participate in the Historic Hotels of America program operated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Participating hotels throughout the Region include Berea's Boone Tavern (Kentucky), the General Morgan Inn (Greeneville, Tennessee), the Martha Washington (Abingdon, Virginia), and the Blennerhassett Hotel (Parkersburg, West Virginia). By participating, these hotels gain access to a national registration network and marketing through the National Trust's membership and media resources.⁴¹

Membership in the network requires that a property be listed—or be eligible to be listed—on the National Register of Historic Places. State “Main Street” programs, local development districts (LDDs), and state historic preservation offices should work with communities to promote participation in the program and assist eligible businesses with the listing process. Further, government agencies should consider working with the National Trust to help promote the development or redevelopment of these properties.

⁴¹ Historic Hotels of America, “Fact Sheet,” http://phgcdn.com/pdfs/uploads/Historic_Hotels_of_America_Fact_Sheet_2019.pdf.



Capacity and room availability are issues in some parts of the Region, particularly in Central Appalachia. Large energy and energy services companies, highway construction companies, and other firms often procure large blocks of rooms for their workers. In many cases, workers occupy rooms for extended periods of time—sometimes for weeks or even months. While these arrangements are certainly beneficial to the hotel operators and the associated industries, they can also sometimes disrupt local tourism efforts. Unfortunately, the uncertain and sporadic nature of these industries may deter investment in additional lodging capacity.

Campgrounds comprise a final piece of the Region's lodging portfolio. Appalachian campgrounds range from “primitive” camp sites—which are often little more than flat, clear areas for tents—to luxury RV resorts, which boast amenities like high-speed internet, cable TV, swimming pools, and lavish fitness centers.

About 26% of respondents to the visitor survey reported they use tent camping, and 9% use RV campsites. While campers may not comprise a large percentage of visitors,

they represent an important segment of the market. Camping appeals to a wide range of the tourism market, and it's becoming increasingly popular among millennials. While millennials comprise 31% of the general population, they comprise 56% of new campers in 2018.⁴²

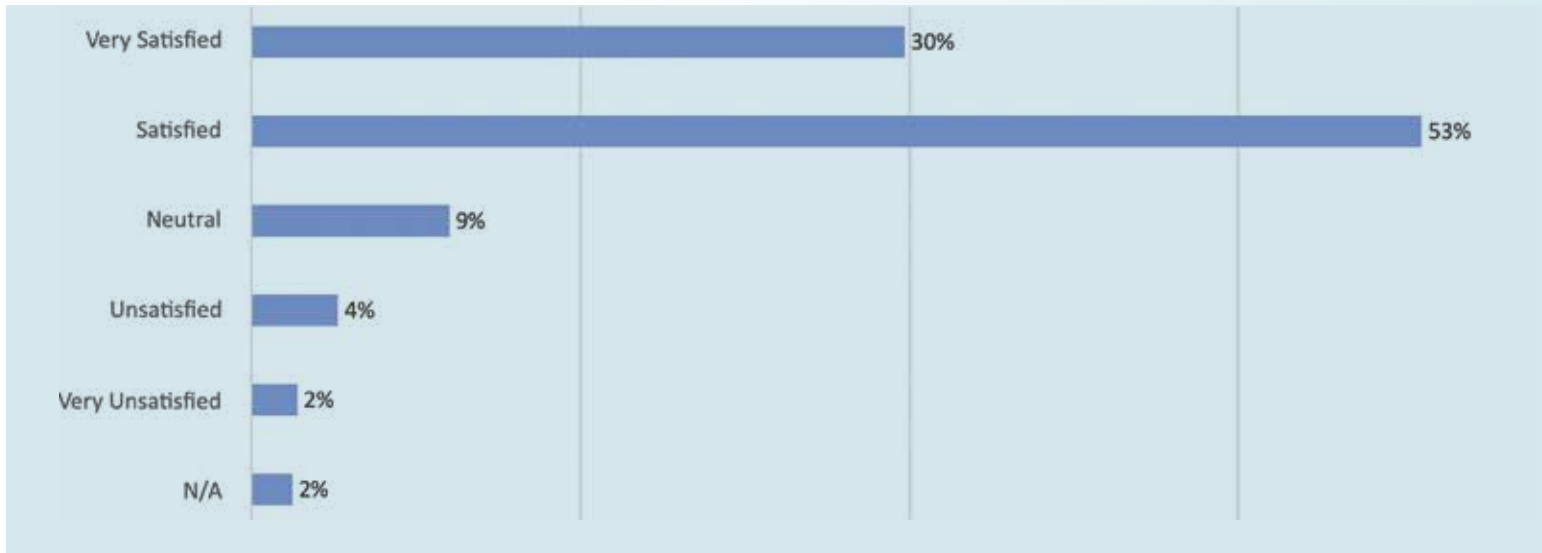
Interestingly, on a national level, camping is also becoming more diverse. According to the most recent National Camping Report (2019), the number of new non-white campers has now surpassed the number of new white campers, with 51% of new campers in 2019 representing a nonwhite population. This is not just a one-off, either, as the same report noted a steady increase in underrepresented campers over the past five years.⁴³

While stakeholders and communities with camping sites were generally excited to host campers, they also expressed frustration at the lack of adequate facilities. Many wanted more

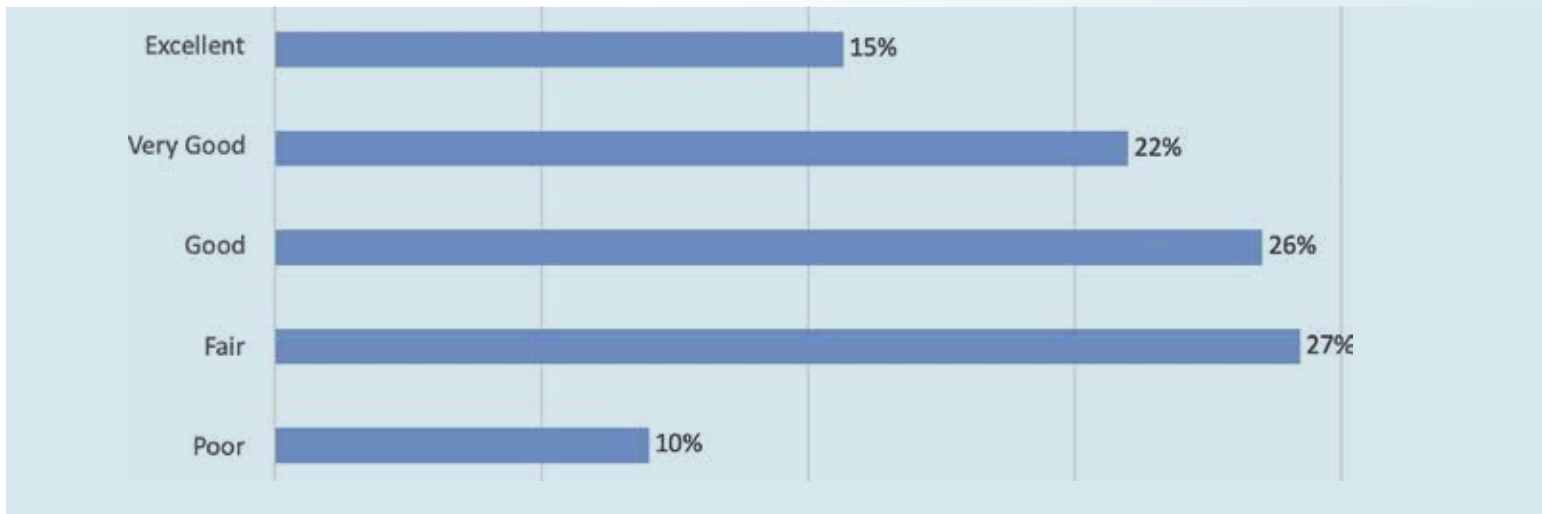
⁴² Cairn Consulting Group, “North American Camping Report, 2019,” <http://koa.uberflip.com/i/1101994-2019-koa-north-american-camping-report>.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

f7.8 Dining satisfaction among Appalachian visitors



f7.9 Stakeholder ratings of local dining establishments



full-service camping sites, complete with RV hook-ups and a dump station. However, few communities seemed to view campsites as a critical element in their overall strategy. For instance, many communities seemed to put campsites where space was available—not where camping was best suited.

Compounding these issues were problems related to the definition of “camper,” and the line between short-term visitor and long-term resident. While many parts of the Region enjoy

numerous campgrounds with plenty of spaces available for tourists, others appear to be filled with permanent or semi-permanent residents. Many are seasonal or long-term workers, while others are retirees living full-time in a fixed RV. In some cases, public campgrounds have become, in practical terms, low-income housing. While these campgrounds boast high year-round occupancy rates, they deter tourists and use space intended for recreational visitors. A prevalence of long-term users may also impact safety perceptions, further

degrading visitors' experiences.

Many communities combat this practice through the enforcement of one- or two-week limits for camping spaces. While campgrounds with these limits may have higher vacancy rates—particularly in off-season months—they are more welcoming to recreational visitors. These limits also cut down on crime and drug use associated with some campgrounds and help encourage long-term residents to secure safer conventional housing.

Dining

While lodging generally accommodates visitors, dining can play a major role in attracting them. Trying local restaurants was the second most popular activity among respondents to the visitor survey, with 81% responding that they enjoyed trying local food. The only activity more popular was taking in the Region's natural beauty (86%), though food-related activities were still more popular than activities related to heritage sites (64%) and arts and crafts (55%).

For the most part, visitors reported being satisfied with their dining experiences in the Region. Over 80% of respondents were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their dining activities, while only 6% responded that they were “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied.”

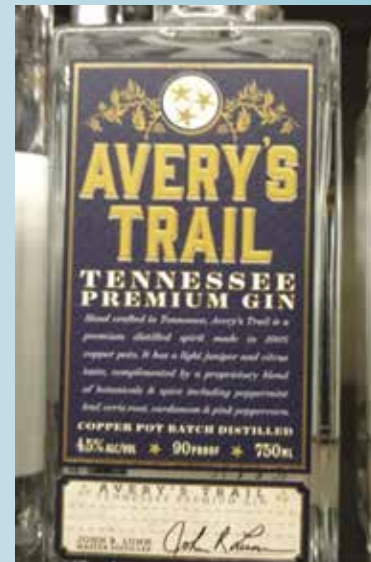
Stakeholders, however, were not as impressed by their communities' local dining options. While about 37% rated local establishments as “very good” or “excellent,” another 37% also rated their local dining venues as either “fair” or “poor.”

This disparity in views between the stakeholders and visitors may be attributed to the differing geographic distributions of survey respondents. Most of the respondents to the visitor survey were traveling to popular destinations, which typically have a variety of quality dining options. Meanwhile, respondents to the stakeholder survey were more evenly distributed across the Region, with many working in smaller communities with fewer dining options. As a result, dining in these communities may be less competitive.

In comments from both surveys, dining was noted as an issue in many of the smaller or more rural areas. Local tourism officials generally noted three areas of concern related to dining: a lack of quality, a lack of variety, and a lack of authenticity. Most communities visited as part of the case



Local restaurants, like the Mason Jar on Main in Red Bay, Alabama, help historic downtowns attract visitors.



Avery's Trail, a premium gin, is manufactured in the heart of Appalachia: Newport, Tennessee.

Interestingly, there appears to be a correlation between economic distress and the presence of alcohol restrictions.



Importance of changing alcohol sales laws in promoting local tourism



studies faced issues in at least one of these areas, while some struggled with all three.

While quality issues are sometimes related to the quality of food served, they may also reflect other issues, such as overall dining experience and staff friendliness. Stakeholders in several communities lamented the state of their local dining establishments, and in many cases, they placed blame on inexperienced restaurant operators. In many instances, they said, restaurateurs opened businesses with unrealistic expectations, and then failed to keep regular hours and be consistent with the quality of food and service. Compounding these issues is the rising influence of social media, as many of today's travelers make dining decisions based on online reviews. Left unchecked, bad experiences can quickly come to define an establishment.

With all that said, the most frequent concern raised by stakeholders was not the quality of existing establishments, but rather the lack of variety among them. "We need more dining options" and "We need a better mix of restaurants" were common statements from tourism officials. In many cases, stakeholders bemoaned a lack of sit-down establishments. While most communities claimed at least a few casual restaurants, few could claim fine dining establishments that generated significant revenue and attracted higher-income visitors. Issues related to variety also

include the inability—or reluctance—of some establishments to accommodate visitors with plant-based dietary preferences, such as vegetarian or vegan patrons, visitors with medical restrictions, or travelers adhering to cultural or religious dietary codes (i.e., kosher or halal).

Authenticity can also be an issue. Current travelers, particularly millennials, crave authentic travel experiences. These including dining activities. Visitors want to explore authentic local foods using local products and ingredients. Chain restaurants, however, dilute or deter efforts towards authenticity in some areas. Stakeholders in some case study communities expressed dismay not only at the proliferation of homogenous chains but also at the willingness of local residents to support them over local establishments.

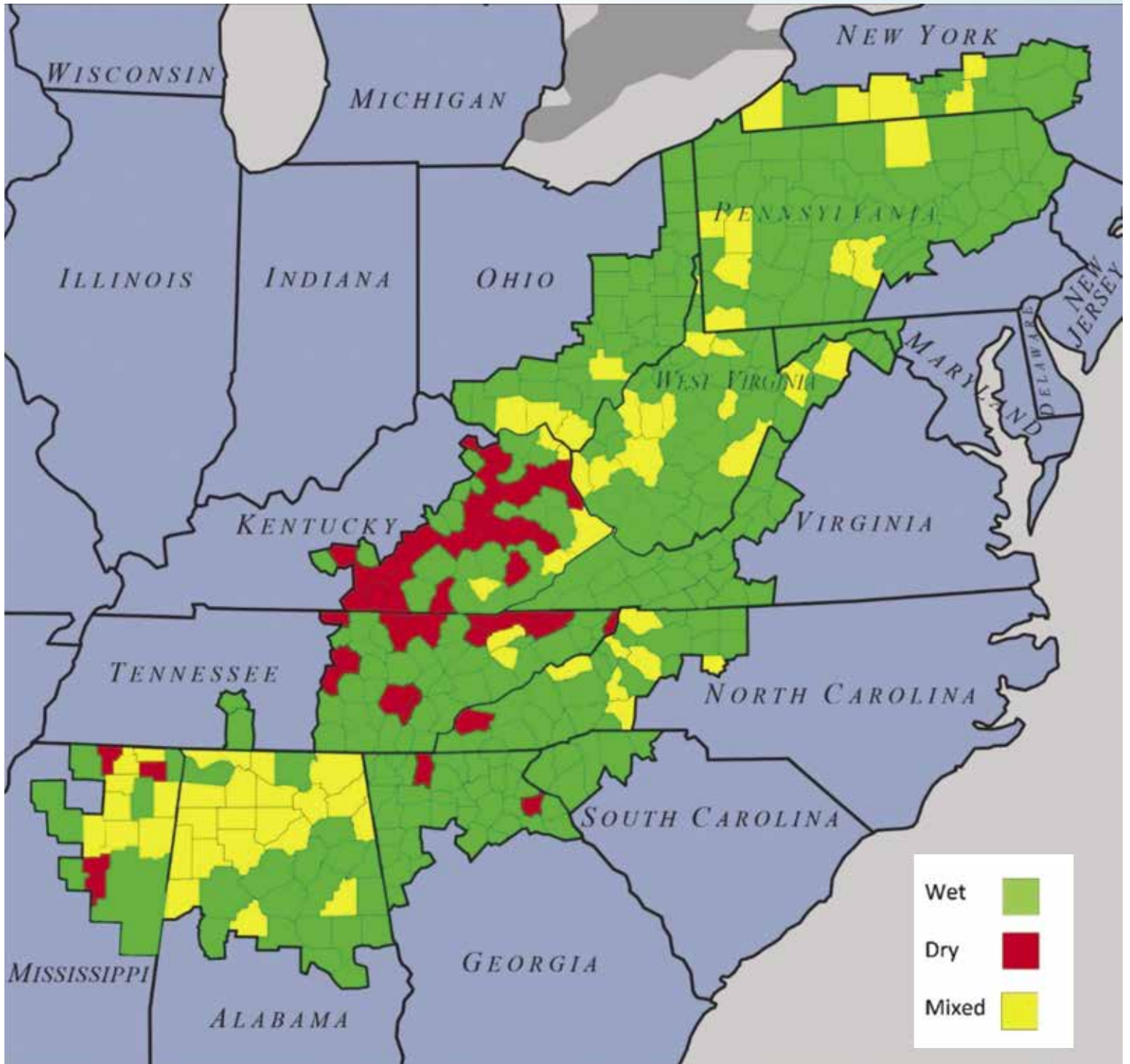
Beer, Wine, and Spirits

Over the past two decades, local beer, wine, and spirits have grown dramatically in popularity. Today, craft beer makes up over 13% of all beer sold in the United States; in fact, the craft beer industry grew by over 4% in 2018 alone.⁴⁴ Likewise, other forms of alcoholic beverages have also seen an uptick. Wineries are found across the Appalachian Region, as are

⁴⁴ Brewers Association, "Annual Growth Report, 2018," <https://www.brewersassociation.org/press-releases/brewers-association-releases-annual-growth-report/>.

⁴⁵ Tennessee Department of Tourism, "Tennessee Whiskey Trail," <https://www.tnwhiskeytrail.com/map/>.

f7.13 Laws restricting alcohol sales are most common in Central and South Appalachia.



f7.14 Stakeholder's visitors center ratings



small craft distilleries, which produce a wide range of spirits. There are 13 whiskey distilleries in East Tennessee alone, most of which have been established since 2000.⁴⁵

Over 45% of respondents to the visitor survey reported that they enjoyed trying local beer, wine, and spirits, and these activities were popular among a wide range of age groups. Popularity tended to increase with education, as 55% of respondents with advanced degrees and 49% of those with bachelor's degrees liked trying local alcoholic beverages. In contrast, only 15% of participants with no college experience partook in these activities.

Not surprisingly, while stakeholders expressed enthusiasm for the trend, they also noted some issues. Many of these problems were similar to those encountered with dining. For instance, some brewers and distillers are ill-equipped to manufacture products on a commercial scale, leading to issues related to quality and consistency. Many of these brewers are self-taught and lack the technical ability—at least initially—to make a consistent and competitive product.

Authenticity is also a subject of debate. While regional appellations can add value to products, they can also create controversies. For example, what exactly constitutes a Tennessee whiskey or a Kentucky bourbon? What distinguishes moonshine from a simple clear-grain alcohol? As a result of some of these debates, some states are taking

action to rigidly define these terms. While these efforts help protect product integrity, they may also create barriers to future entrepreneurs.⁴⁶

A more significant barrier in some parts of the Region are Prohibition-era laws regulating or prohibiting alcohol sales. While many of these laws have been rolled back in recent years, a large number remain, particularly in rural areas in South and South Central Appalachia. More than 45% of stakeholders stated that changes in alcohol sales laws were an important step in growing local tourism, and more than 10% believed such changes were “extremely important” (see Figure 7.12).

Interestingly, there appears to be a correlation between economic distress and the presence of alcohol restrictions. Of the 48 “dry” counties in the Appalachian Region, 45 are classified by ARC as either “distressed” (30 counties) or “at risk” (15 counties). Every distressed county in Kentucky is either “dry” (counties with no alcohol sales) or “mixed” (dry counties with certain municipalities that do allow for sales). While alcohol restrictions may not be a direct cause

⁴⁵ Jim Myers, “Distillers Battle Over Tennessee Whiskey Definition,” *Tennessean*, December 9, 2014; Helen Rosko, “Drinking and Remaking Place: A Case Study of Commercial Moonshine in East Tennessee” Master's Thesis: University of Tennessee, 2015.

⁴⁷ National Alcoholic Beverage Control Association, “Wet and Dry Counties, 2017,” www.nabca.org.



f7.15 The visitor center in Marietta, Ohio, located in a renovated historic armory, features helpful maps, a community timeline, and an interactive kiosk for after-hours visitors.



f7.16 Visitors to the Natchez Trace in early 2019 were greeted with this closure notice.

of distress, this correlation suggests that dry counties and distressed areas may share demographic and cultural characteristics.⁴⁷

The impacts of the laws are multi-faceted. First, they serve to deter visits from a valuable demographic: high-income travelers that would like to enjoy alcohol on their vacations. Second, they deny restaurants a valuable and profitable revenue stream. Third, these laws are a formidable barrier to the creation of the “white tablecloth” restaurants and fine-dining establishments many small communities need. Lastly, these counties also deny themselves important revenues from taxes on the sale of alcohol. In many cases, they essentially “give” these revenues to adjacent counties, thus helping provide their neighbors with funding for the schools, roads, and services they need for themselves.

Visitor Centers

Visitor centers provide an essential service to both tourists and local businesses. The centers orient tourists to local businesses and attractions; they also provide businesses an important opportunity for direct marketing. Most of the communities visited as case studies had some type of visitor center. However, these centers varied in terms of both quality and content, and the results from the stakeholder survey seem to confirm as much. While 68% rated their visitor centers as “good” or better, that means nearly a third considered their facility as either “fair” or “poor.”

Visitor centers are operated by a range of jurisdictions, and they can be local, state, or federal facilities. Local centers are sometimes operated by the local government, but more

frequently they are run by the Chamber of Commerce or local tourism board. And while state and federal facilities are operated by full-time paid staff, local centers may be operated by part-time employees or volunteers. In some cases, the visitor centers may also house offices for the local Chamber or development board.

A typical visitor center, such as the one in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, features brochures for area attractions and state travel guides. These are usually staffed by a volunteer or part-time docent who helps welcome and orient visitors. The centers also have clean and accessible restrooms and seating areas. The best local facilities, such as the center in Marietta, Ohio, not only provide information about local attractions, but they also introduce visitors to the community and its story. For example, Marietta’s facility includes a prominent timeline of the city’s history and an interactive kiosk for visitors.

Common issues for local centers usually included problems related to funding and staffing. Of course, in many cases, these problems are not unrelated. Inadequate funds led to fewer operating hours, an increased reliance on volunteer or part-time staffing, and divisive or potentially offensive decor.

The worst and most frustrating visitor center experience in this study was found at a National Park Service facility on the Natchez Trace. The research team, which conducted the visit during the United States federal government shutdown in early 2019, was greeted with a locked door, an unapologetic notice, and overflowing trash bins. This experience undermined the value of the center and negated the public investment in the facility.

Analysis

The disparities in lodging, dining, and visitor services are reflective of the distribution of overall tourism activity in the Region, as discussed in Chapter 4. Unsurprisingly, communities that receive large numbers of visitors have better and more varied tourism assets, which naturally leads to a wider range of lodging and dining options. Communities

Improved dining options benefit not only visitors, but also local families. Quality lodging can lead to job creation and new investment in a community.

with fewer visitors, the type of which make up the majority of tourism destinations throughout the Region, struggle to offer the same options as these larger destinations.

However, in spite of these disparities, changes in the travel industry—and in travelers themselves—are creating new opportunities for communities across Appalachia. Research findings and experiences from the case study visits provide important lessons for Appalachian cities and towns. Among these are the following:

- Airbnb and similar services are creating new opportunities for lodging in small communities and rural areas. However, jurisdictions should prepare for these new services by adopting codes that protect visitors, property owners, and neighborhood integrity.
- Historic downtown hotels can help fill gaps in the lodging landscape, and proprietors are benefitting from new ways to market these venues and manage reservations. Local tourism officials should assist these establishments in their efforts.
- Camping is increasing in popularity, especially among young adults, people of color, and LGBTQ+ travelers. Local tourism officials should take steps to create welcoming environments for all travelers. Hospitality and diversity training should be increased and supported across the Region.
- Campgrounds are an important element in the Region's lodging portfolio when it comes to tourism travel. As such, communities should take steps to discourage long-term or permanent campground residency, particularly in facilities intended for tourists.
- Restaurateurs may benefit from entrepreneurship training or mentoring programs, which will allow them to better handle problems and issues facing their establishments.
- While chain establishments fill a niche in the region's dining landscape, local communities should do more to support and promote authentic local venues.
- Alcohol sales restrictions constrain tourism growth and drive visitors—and their dollars—to other communities. They also restrict the development of fine-dining establishments.
- Visitor centers should be accessible, well-staffed, and open as much as possible. The best centers not only promote local attractions, but they also tell the story of the local area.

A Final Word

While the services discussed in this chapter serve tourists, it is important to note that they also play a vital role in improving the local quality of life, and in economic development in general. Improved dining options benefit not only visitors, but also local families. Quality lodging can lead to job creation and new investment in a community. As such, promoting the services and resources discussed in this chapter should be seen as an essential step—not just in tourism development, but in economic and community development.



Promoting the services and resources discussed in this chapter should be seen as an essential step—not just in tourism development, but in economic and community development.

Case Study: Pikeville, Kentucky

The Blue Raven

“I never wanted to come back to Pikeville.”

Back to His Roots

Yet, like many in the Region, the lure of being home and close to family brought chef Matt Corbin back to his roots in Pikeville, Kentucky. In the process, Corbin achieved something many may have thought was impossible: He brought fine dining to the heart of Appalachia's Coal Belt. His restaurant, the Blue Raven, has earned critical praise for what he likes to describe as “pub-style Appalachian cuisine.”

Chef Corbin grew up in Pikeville, where his grandfather owned and operated a Jerry's Restaurant franchise. After high school, he attended the University of Kentucky, where he earned a business degree. Corbin, however, harbored a passion for cooking. After graduation, he enrolled in the culinary program at Sullivan University, a private for-profit institution in Lexington.⁴⁸

After culinary school, Corbin worked in Lexington's restaurants for eight years, gaining a reputation as a rising star in the city's expanding culinary scene. But family ties eventually called him back to Pikeville. Thoughts about his aging grandfather, his parents, and his own young family drew him back to the region. With encouragement from friends and family, he decided to bring his culinary vision to coal country.

⁴⁸ For a full profile of the Blue Raven and Chef Corbin, see Sean Patrick Hill, “The Blue Raven,” *Kentucky Monthly*, April, 2014.



f1

Family ties drew chef and restaurateur Matt Corbin back to his hometown of Pikeville.

A Dream Fulfilled

In starting his own restaurant, Chef Corbin had many advantages over other entrepreneurs: his family had operated a successful restaurant for decades; he holds a business degree; he received formal training in the culinary arts; he has nearly a decade working in professional kitchens; and he had access to capital through family and personal connections.

Corbin named his new venture the Blue Raven, based on his family symbol (a raven) and his alma mater (Wildcat blue). The restaurant opened in 2012 to considerable fanfare. However, despite Corbin's experience and entrepreneurial advantages, the business faced significant challenges early on. As the first fine-dining establishment in the city, it encountered a public that did not know what to expect. Many locals steered clear of the restaurant, thinking it was "too fancy."

Corbin and the restaurant staff responded in a variety of ways. The original menu concept, which focused on tapas-type fare, was changed to more familiar pub-style food. They also undertook a media campaign to counter public perceptions about the formality of the establishment. This campaign stressed the casual nature of the restaurant and let the public know that everyone was welcome.

In the seven years since, the restaurant has developed a loyal customer base, especially among downtown workers and hospital staff. The establishment also attracts tourists and out-of-town clients hosted by local businesses. Currently, the business employs a staff of 22 and enjoys

Pikeville, Kentucky

**"Be open to possibilities."
– Chef Matt Corbin**



COUNTY FACTS

County	Pike
Population (2017) ¹	58,883
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$20,532
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	9.6%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	26.4%
ARC status (2020) ²	Distressed

CITY FACTS

Founded (Blue Raven) ³	2012
Miles to interstate (1-64) ⁴	99
Miles to state capitol (Frankfort, KY) ⁴	164
Miles to nearest metro area (Huntington, WV or Kingsport, TN) ⁴	98
Miles to nearest commercial airport (Huntington Tri-State Airport) ⁴	91

SOURCES

¹ "The Appalachian Region." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² "Socioeconomic Data." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ <https://www.erwintn.org/history>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>



The Blue Raven is located in a converted garage space in downtown Pikeville.



The Blue Raven enjoys a loyal lunchtime following among downtown workers and hospital staff.



Sliced introduced Pikeville to craft pizzas.

annual sales of over \$1 million per year, a number that surpasses the total revenues of some Appalachian counties.

Expansion Plans and a Downtown Vision

Encouraged by the success of the Blue Raven, Corbin opened a second downtown restaurant, Sliced. This venue features quality pizza fare and has also enjoyed considerable success. However, the strain of operating two restaurants proved difficult for Corbin and his staff—so Sliced was later

incorporated into the Blue Raven space, allowing the two restaurants to share resources and kitchen facilities.

Corbin is also working to expand into other areas. He is partnering with an Appalachian coffee roaster to launch a coffeehouse concept in Pikeville. He is also working with three investors to open a microbrewery in the city.

All of these plans are to help fulfill Corbin's vision of an active and thriving downtown. The chef has been a stalwart advocate for downtown Pikeville, serving on the local Main Street Board, and even running, albeit unsuccessfully, for public office.

Corbin believes that Pikeville would be better served if officials focused on promoting small-scale local efforts, as opposed to becoming too fixated on "getting a big company." In the majority of cases, these small businesses are the ones who take up residence in downtowns, improving the local area and, in turn, helping to recruit those larger companies.

Finding a Ready and Willing Workforce

Corbin's biggest issue, by far, is his ability to find and keep good workers. Maintaining staff is a constant struggle, even though he pays better than many other area restaurants. For Corbin, a work ethic counts more than experience. "We can train them to work in a kitchen," he states, adding, "but you can't teach them to be a hard worker."

Not surprisingly, opioids have taken a toll on the local workforce. Addiction impacts businesses like Corbin's in many ways, but mostly by making employees unreliable. Still, Corbin and other employers face a dilemma when confronting substance abuse: If he regularly tested all workers, he might end up with a shortage of labor.

An Emphasis on Local Quality

Corbin views the Blue Raven as a farm-to-table establishment, using local produce whenever possible. He grows some produce on his own farm and relies on a small but dedicated group of area farmers and producers for other products ranging from salad greens to sausages. While he plans to soon produce his own house beer, he also carries almost two dozen local brews from regional suppliers.

However, Corbin was quick to point out some problems with local goods. One was the seasonality of some produce, an



issue he was working to alleviate with the help of a greenhouse. Another is the reluctance of farmers to grow “something different.” Many producers are risk-averse, which may make them unable to respond to new demands for new products.

Lessons Learned

The Blue Raven shows the potential for expanded and innovative dining in Appalachian communities. Matt Corbin’s efforts should serve as an inspiration to entrepreneurs trying to bring quality experiences to revitalizing downtown areas. Among the lessons learned are the following:

- Corbin’s story shows the importance of training and education in achieving success. States and local officials should do more to introduce both business skills and vocational training, perhaps in conjunction with one another.
- Access to capital is often a barrier for small business development. Corbin’s family support is an example of an informal funding network for small business development. Similar approaches are sometimes found in ethnic and religious communities. More research should be done on these types of funding networks and the potential they have for rural areas.
- Corbin’s occasional frustrations and disagreements with local government and local community members are not unique. In some instances, communities may be better-served by local officials focusing more on small business development, especially those that make the local area more desirable for other potential business development.
- Building off this previous point, local officials and stakeholders should acknowledge the particularly important role hospitality venues have in economic development. Creating a viable, dynamic downtown can do wonders when it comes to attracting large businesses to an area.
- Corbin’s experiences with workers reflect a common difficulty in finding reliable workers in the restaurant industry, and the opioid epidemic has only made this problem worse. As communities begin tackling drug and addiction issues, improvements made in this space are experienced in many others beyond public health—such as tourism and a local area’s overall workforce strength.

8 Improving Infrastructure and the Built Environment

Appalachia's vast tourism resources have little value if no one can get to them. Roads, signage, and other infrastructure are a vital component of the Region's tourism landscape. Likewise, in the digital age of today, information highways are rapidly becoming as important as their paved counterparts. Both visitors and industry workers now rely on affordable and accessible telecommunication networks as a key element of their daily activities.

Communities with downtowns have an impact on visitors' impressions. As tourism becomes more ingrained in local economies, consideration of these assets from a tourism perspective becomes ever more important.

The built environment is closely tied to an area's infrastructure. It includes all the human-made places we live and work, such as our homes, buildings, streets, and parks. Across the Region, communities with downtowns—both in their planning and maintenance—have an impact on visitors' impressions of the local communities. As tourism

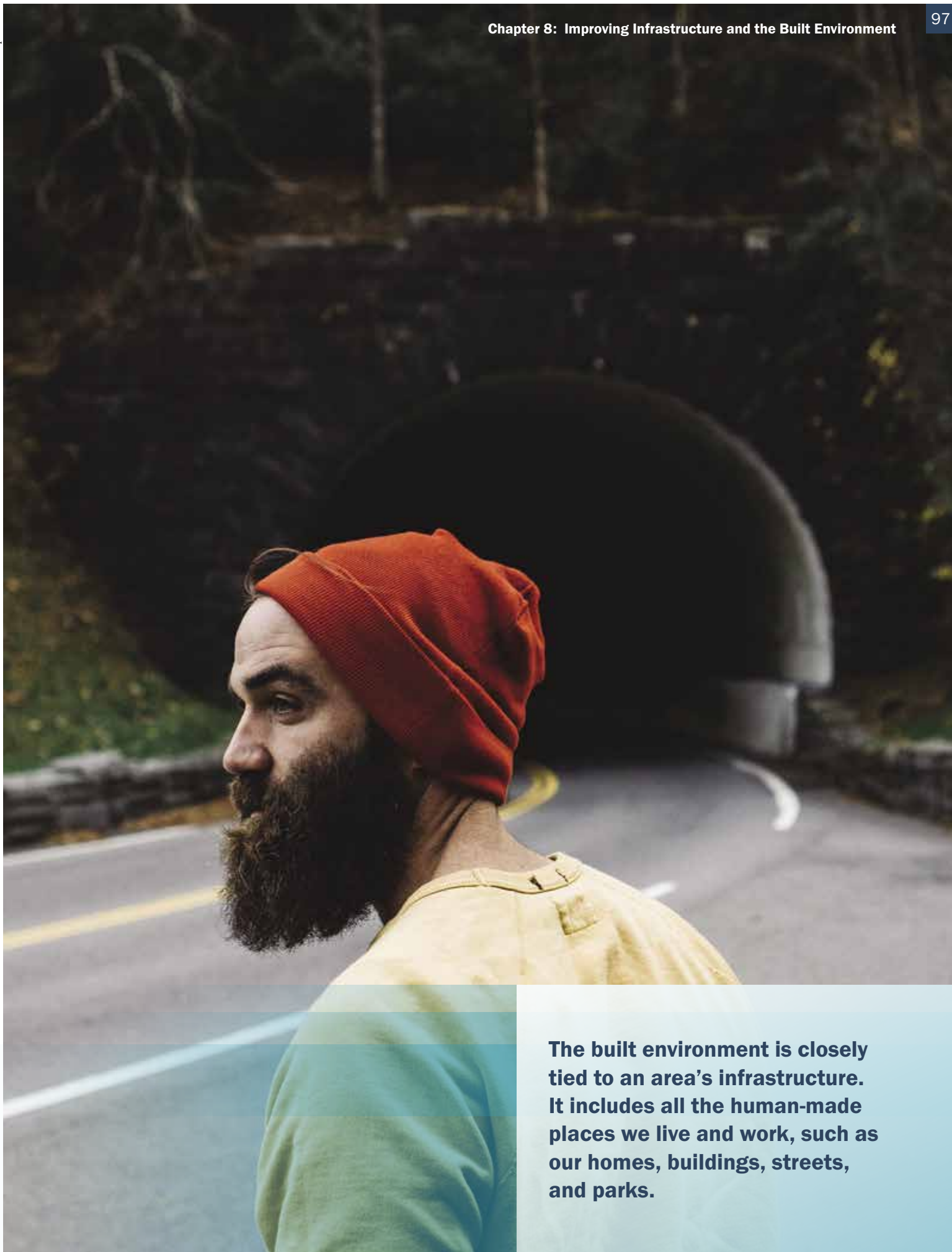
becomes more ingrained in local economies, consideration of these assets from a tourism perspective becomes ever more important.

Roads and Parking

Roads and road conditions were noted as issues by both stakeholders and visitors on their respective surveys. Road improvements ranked high among needs expressed by local stakeholders, with 85% of survey participants ranking them as “important” or higher. Almost a third of stakeholders considered better roads to be “extremely important” for tourism growth. Stakeholder barrier responses included comments such as “highway improvements,” “two-lane roads,” and “good roads so people can get here.”

While stakeholders expressed a desire for improved highways, visitors seemed generally pleased with road conditions on their trip. Sixty-four percent of visitors surveyed were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the roads on their trip, with only 12% expressing dissatisfaction. As with some other findings mentioned previously, the discrepancy between stakeholders and visitors may be due to the distribution of survey respondents throughout the Region. The majority of respondents to the visitor survey were likely traveling to popular or more established destinations, many of which are likely to have good roadways. Many stakeholder participants, on the other hand, came from smaller and more rural communities that may lack quality roadways.

While roads are very important as a means of getting visitors to a destination, it also is important to recognize that Appalachian



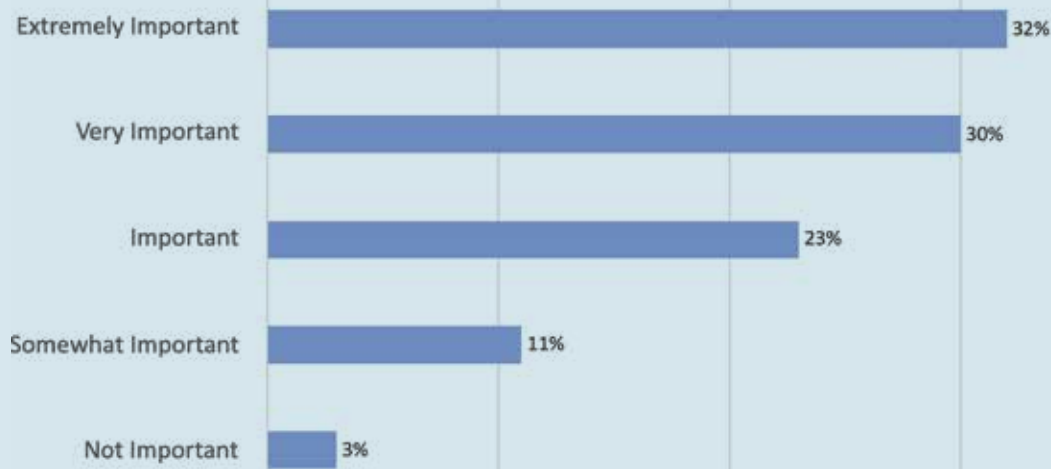
The built environment is closely tied to an area's infrastructure. It includes all the human-made places we live and work, such as our homes, buildings, streets, and parks.

roads, in some cases, are the destination. Roadways such as the Tail of the Dragon (Tennessee), the Blue Ridge Parkway (North Carolina), and the Natchez Trace (Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee) have become major attractions, especially among driving enthusiasts and motorcyclists. Road infrastructure, such as the New River Gorge Bridge (West Virginia) and the Lynn Cove Viaduct (North Carolina) are now popular destinations that even feature guided tours.

Tourism related to motoring and cycling can be a lucrative market for some communities. Stakeholders in Erwin, Tennessee, for example, cited motorcyclists as one of their most important visitor groups. However, the winding roadways that tend to draw these visitors carry risks. Accidents sometimes occur as motorists test their skills on unfamiliar mountain roads. As such, communities that benefit from these visitors should view emergency services as an essential element of their tourism investments.

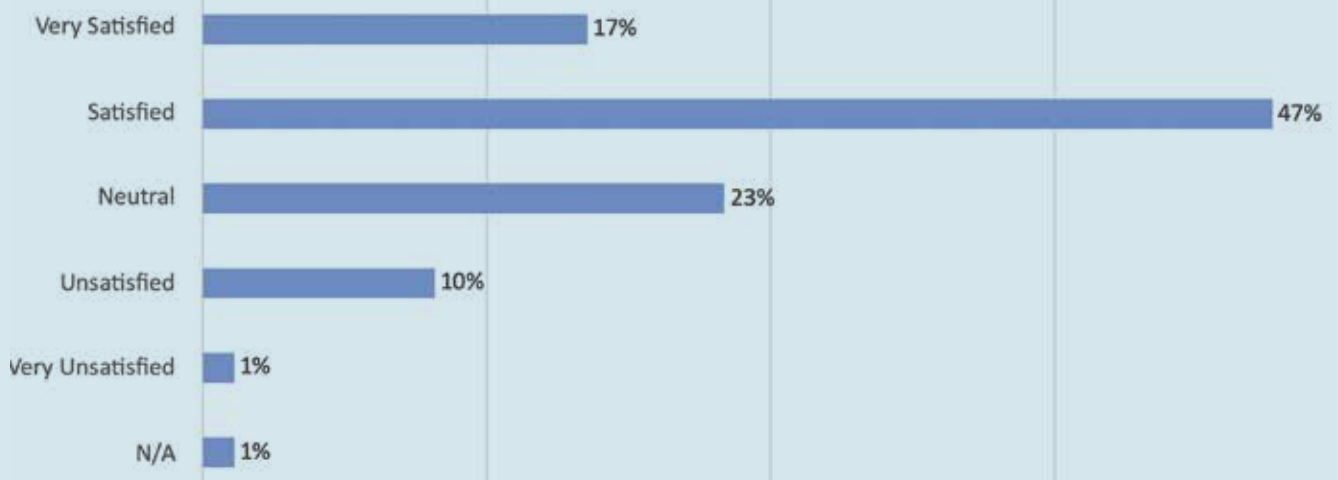
f8.1

The importance of road improvements for tourism development among tourism stakeholders



f8.2

Visitor satisfaction with Appalachian roads



Downtown bypasses create a different type of risk for communities. Cities and towns sometimes pursue bypasses to help reduce traffic in their downtown areas, which can be a legitimate concern, especially when it comes to dealing with large trucks and other commercial vehicles. The main benefit of a bypass is also the main drawback—they route traffic away from downtown. It's not uncommon, then, for both drivers and local businesses to gravitate towards the new road, which can lead to downtown decline. Communities should simply bear these considerations in mind—not just the flow of traffic, but downtown vitality, as well—when discussing bypass developments.

Parking was noted as a concern by several respondents to the stakeholder survey. Major destination areas, such as Gatlinburg, Tennessee, have constructed large downtown parking structures to help create safe and affordable spaces for visitors. Smaller communities generally have fewer options, with many relying heavily on street parking, which can become particularly crowded during the peak season and special events. Some communities, such as Point Pleasant, West Virginia, use off-site parking and shuttles to manage crowds. Williamson, West Virginia, took the innovative approach of converting an empty storefront into covered parking for downtown hotel guests.

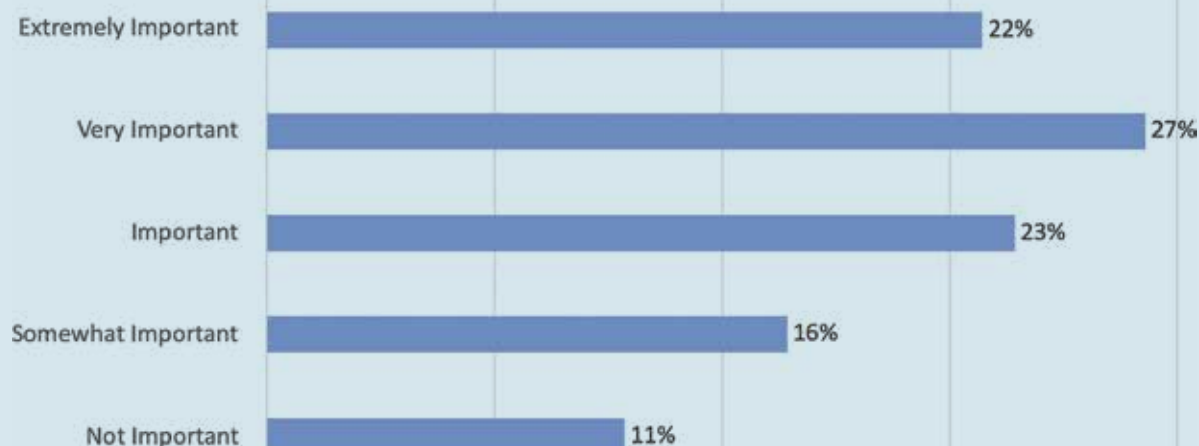


f8.3 While the New River Gorge Bridge was constructed to improve transportation, it has become a major tourist attraction. Today it boasts a visitor's center, guided tours, and an annual celebration event.
Photo courtesy National Park Service.



f8.4 Williamson, West Virginia transformed a vacant downtown building into a parking structure.

f8.5 The importance of public transportation for tourism development among tourism stakeholders





Marietta, Ohio's trolleys (left) provide tours of the city. Pittsburgh's historic Duquesne Incline (right) is popular among visitors. Image from Wikipedia Commons.



Chattanooga, Tennessee's electric buses provide clean and efficient transit for visitors. Chattanooga bus photo courtesy of Brett VA.



Some communities, like Ducktown, Tennessee, provide complementary charging to visitors with electric vehicles (EVs).



EV drivers visiting the Region use social media to express frustration with so-called “icers,” such as this truck blocking a Tesla supercharger station in Bristol, Tennessee. Screenshot from Instagram.com.

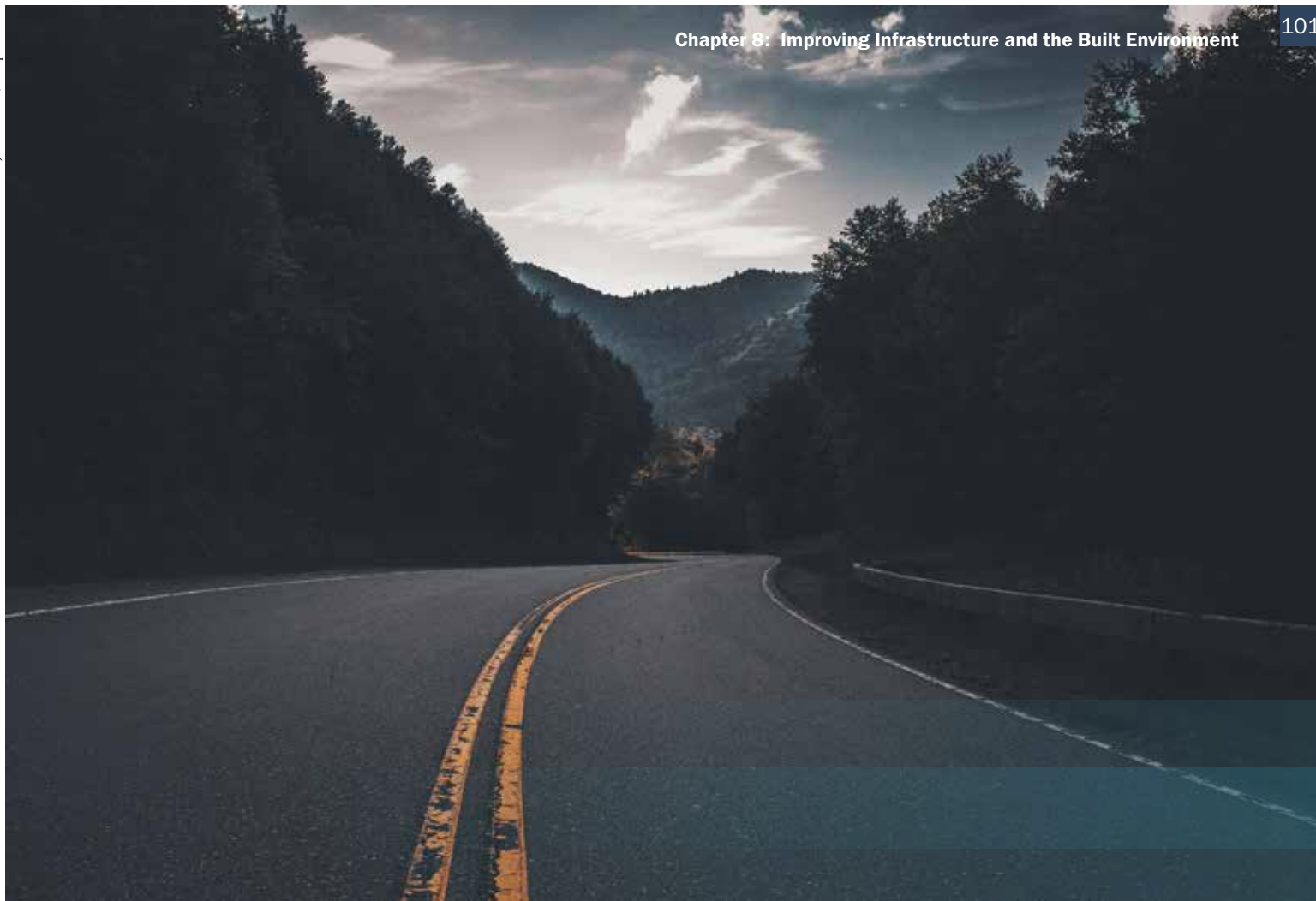
Public Transportation

Public transportation serves multiple functions in destination communities. First, it helps visitors navigate the local landscape, providing them with convenient and affordable access to local amenities. It also provides low-cost transportation for workers, helping them get to jobs in restaurants, hotels, and other tourism-related establishments. In addition, by alleviating issues related to traffic congestion and parking, public transportation can play an important role in reducing the environmental impact of tourism activities.

Given the general lack of public transportation available in many communities throughout the Region, it's not surprising that public transportation was a concern among many tourism industry stakeholders. Seventy-three percent of stakeholders surveyed considered public transportation as an important factor in tourism development, with 22% of respondents deeming it “extremely important.” This level of interest is particularly interesting given the fact that 46% of stakeholder respondents were from counties with less than 30,000 residents, which are areas typically not associated with mass transit systems.

For most communities, public transportation, at least in terms of the tourism-related variety, consists of local shuttles and visitor trolleys. These range from small carts to large buses. Among the most popular options are trolley buses, which not only provide transit but also help enhance the visitor experience. Marietta, Ohio's trolleys are typical of this type of vehicle (see Figure 8.6). While the Marietta trolleys give tours of the city, other communities sometimes use similar vehicles as conventional public transit.

Some communities are now using alternative fuels to power their visitor shuttles and trolleys. Chattanooga, Tennessee, a leader in this field, has been using electric shuttles for over 25 years (see Figure 8.6). Knoxville, Tennessee, meanwhile, uses hybrid electric trolleys. Other systems have adopted vehicles that rely on compressed natural gas or biofuels, which saves money and promotes sustainability. Alternative fuel vehicles can also make a positive statement about the community and its sustainability efforts, enhancing visitor perceptions. They can even help change a community's narrative. For example, Chattanooga was deemed “the dirtiest city in America” in 1969. Today, it is recognized as one of the nation's greenest communities.⁴⁹



As with roads, public transportation can become a tourist attraction. Chattanooga and Pittsburgh, for example, have inclines or funiculars that not only provide transit to locals, but also attract large numbers of visitors.

Ridesharing

Ridesharing services, such as Uber and Lyft, have emerged as convenient transportation options for visitors in many cities. Tourists around the world now use these on-demand services, which rely heavily on smartphones and wireless infrastructure. While these services may now be ubiquitous in most cities, their adoption in rural areas has been slow and haphazard. Recent research indicates that only about 19% of rural residents use ridesharing services, well below the national average of 36%.

A number of factors contribute to the slow growth of ridesharing services in rural areas like Appalachia. Low population densities, limited broadband and cell-phone service, a lack of credit cards, and longer ride distances all contribute to fewer

drivers on the road. This disparity may be slowly disappearing, however, and many experts expect that with increased awareness and improved accessibility, these services will be more available in rural areas in the near future.⁵⁰

This change is already underway in parts of the Region. Many of the case study communities in this study—including Point Pleasant, West Virginia; Red Bay, Alabama; Pikeville, Kentucky; and Jamestown, New York—have some access to ridesharing services. While Lyft appears to be more prevalent in these areas, a few communities, such as Marietta, Ohio, have both Uber and Lyft providers. As telecommunication improves across the Region, the number of drivers and availability of these services should increase.

The significance of this expansion goes beyond tourism. The services provide entrepreneurial opportunities and

⁴⁹ Jill Neimark, “The EPA Once Said This Was The Dirtiest City In America. Now It’s One Of Our Greenest,” <https://www.good.is/articles/chattanooga-dirty-to-green-city>.

⁵⁰ Jingjing Jiang, “More Americans are Using Ride Hailing Apps,” Pew Research Center, January 4, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/04/more-americans-are-using-ride-hailing-apps/>; Rhoda C. Joseph, Ride-Sharing Services: The Tumultuous Tale of the Rural Urban Divide,” Twenty-fourth Americas Conference on Information Systems, New Orleans, 2018, <https://aisel.aisnet.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1128&context=amcis2018>.

supplemental income for Appalachian families. They also provide important services for local residents by way of providing affordable rides for medical appointments, work, and other needs. While visitors are only one facet of the rider market, they may prove to be the “tipping point” that makes the services viable in some areas.

Smaller communities should work to improve access to regional air services through improved roads and an increase in shuttle services.

Electric and Autonomous Vehicles

Electric vehicles (EVs) currently make up just a small percentage of overall vehicles on the road, with only about 1% of current cars on U.S. roads being electric. While this number may be small, the number of EVs on the road has grown exponentially in recent years. In fact, there are now over one million electric cars in the United States, and this number continues to increase annually. In 2018, an EV, the Tesla Model 3, was the bestselling small to mid-size luxury car in the country.⁵¹

So, while the number of EV drivers is still relatively small, they comprise a very lucrative tourism market. EV drivers tend to be over 40 with high incomes and high levels of educational attainment; in fact, 70% of owners have a college degree. Owners of electric cars also typically have high levels of environmental awareness, with 40% citing environmental concerns as their main motivation for buying an electric car.⁵²

In short, these are visitors Appalachian communities should want to attract. In order to do so, however, areas must first develop the infrastructure necessary to be EV-friendly. Fortunately, this infrastructure consists of a single and fairly inexpensive device—a charging station. Charging stations come in two basic forms—wall-mounted and freestanding—with both using a standardized connector.

Prices for chargers range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand. Installed costs vary depending on the location and type of charger. An unnetworked level-two charger (240v) can be installed for less than \$1,000. High speed level-three chargers, such as the ones operated by Tesla, can cost over \$50,000—but they can charge a car to 80% in as little as 30 minutes. Some communities recoup these investments by charging patrons, while others use chargers as a free service to attract visitors. Many hotels and restaurants now feature chargers as a customer amenity.⁵³

While there are nearly 60,000 EV charging stations in the United States, the distribution of these sites across Appalachia is uneven. Not surprisingly, urban areas and interstate corridors are well-served, and an EV driver could easily traverse the length of the Appalachian Region using the interstate highway system. Rural areas are not as well-served, with some areas, such as Central Appalachia and Northwest Pennsylvania, having only a handful of stations.

Service along Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) communities also varies considerably. For example, the eastern portion of Corridor V has multiple charging stations, while there is a 100-mile stretch along the western part of the route—between Decatur, Alabama and Tupelo, Mississippi—without a single EV charger. Similarly, there is not a single charger along Corridor C between the outskirts of Columbus, Ohio, and its terminus in Portsmouth, Ohio. Somewhat surprisingly, National Park Service parkways are also unserved, as there are very few EV chargers along the routes of the Natchez Trace Parkway or the Blue Ridge Parkway.⁵⁴

Also notable is the lack of chargers in public facilities built

⁵¹ Niall McCarthy, “The Tesla Model 3 was the Best Selling Luxury Car in America Last Year,” *Forbes*, February 8, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2019/02/08/the-tesla-model-3-was-the-best-selling-luxury-car-in-america-last-year-infographic/#61044fad7b07>; Maxine Joselow, “The U.S. has 1 Million Electric Vehicles, but Does it Matter?”, *Scientific American*, October 12, 2018.

⁵² Carmax and Clean Technica, “2017 Hybrid/EV Survey Results,” <https://www.carmax.com/articles/hybrid-electric-2017-survey-results>.

⁵³ Energetics, Inc. et al., *Charging Station Installation Analysis: Tompkins County Plug-in Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan*, February 2017, <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/itctc/projects/EV/Tompkins%20EVSE%20Installation%20Analysis%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁵⁴ EV charging stations mapped using PlugShare.com and the US DOE Alternative Fuels Data Center.

to serve and attract tourists. Travel centers along the West Virginia Turnpike, for example, provide gas, food, coffee, even souvenirs—but EV chargers are conspicuously absent. Likewise, Central Appalachia’s three major artisan centers—Tamarack, the Kentucky Artisan Center, and Heartwood—also lack chargers. Some state parks now have chargers, but most welcome centers and rest areas lack the devices.

Where they do exist, chargers are being used. Comments on PlugShare, a popular online charging station directory, include photos and comments from visitors across the Region. However, a few visitors expressed frustration that chargers were inoperable. For example, a visitor to Wise, Virginia, complained “Broken. Got Stranded. Big delay in time.” Others sometimes found chargers blocked by other vehicles. At times this was done deliberately by locals hostile to EVs or EV drivers. Considering these issues, it’s important for communities with EV chargers to maintain them and enforce parking restrictions.⁵⁵

Autonomous (self-driving) vehicles are often associated with EVs. While only a subset of EVs incorporate autonomous technologies, the percentage of self-driving vehicles is growing and now includes gasoline-powered cars, as well. These technologies are expected to become more common in the near future, with many experts believing that autonomous vehicles will be a disruptive technology with the potential to transform many industries, including tourism.

Some of these changes could certainly end up benefitting tourism in the Region. For example, imagine a downloadable self-driving tour of the Crooked Road with an accompanying narration and playlist. However, other changes could leave parts of the Region further isolated; for instance, General Motors’ current autonomous system only works on limited access highways. This technology, known as “Super Cruise,” might discourage drivers from visiting areas off the main roads.

While the future of this technology remains unclear, tourism officials should be aware of its development and monitor potential changes moving forward. They should also keep apprised of opportunities related to autonomous driving and encourage research into innovative applications of the technology.

Pedestrian and Micromobility

Sidewalks, walking paths, and improved pedestrian facilities were named as important needs by a number of stakeholders. Many viewed improvements as a critical element of downtown redevelopment efforts, with several communities throughout the Region building these elements into their development strategies. For instance, Erwin, Tennessee, incorporated sidewalk improvements into the early phases of its downtown revitalization efforts.

A more frequently cited problem was the connections between trailheads and nearby communities. Hikers, especially Appalachian Trail thru-hikers, frequently visit trail towns to rest, dine, and purchase supplies. As such, they represent an important market for trail communities. In some cases, as in Damascus, Virginia, the trail runs through the center of town, though it’s more common for hikers to find themselves on a roadside a few miles from town, with just two options for traveling into the community, both of which can be unsafe: walk along the shoulder of a roadway or hitch a ride with a stranger.



f8.10 Trail hostels, such as this one near Erwin, Tennessee, provide shuttle service to nearby towns for thru-hikers on the Appalachian Trail.

Communities have responded to this need in different ways. Many now work with local hostels and taxi services to provide safe and convenient transit into town. Others are working to create trail connections and pedestrian walkways so that hikers can safely walk to local businesses and services. Hikers in Erwin, Tennessee, currently benefit from a local shuttle, though folks in the community expressed interest in developing a walking path linking the trail to the downtown area.

⁵⁵ www.plugshare.com.

Some communities are now adopting micromobility service and technologies to increase the ease of pedestrian travel. Micromobility options include devices like rentable electric scooters, Segways, and small electric bicycles. Although a recent phenomenon, this nascent industry is backed by transportation giants like Uber and Lyft. While these technologies are mainly found in urban areas, given their growing popularity, they could soon be found in smaller communities.



f8.11 (Left) Micromobility devices, like these rentable electric scooters in downtown Knoxville, can increase visitor mobility but also carry significant risks. (Right) This bicycle maintenance kiosk in Berea, Kentucky, welcomes visitors using alternative transportation.

Like many new technologies, many micromobility devices currently operate on the fringes of existing traffic and safety regulations. Communities considering micromobility should revisit their existing traffic laws to ensure they can adequately regulate these vehicles and maintain public safety.⁵⁶

Rail, Water, and Air Transportation

Appalachia currently has limited passenger rail service. Many states, such as Tennessee and Kentucky, have no

direct rail access in the Appalachian portions of their states. In other areas, rail access is limited to a few major cities, such as Birmingham and Pittsburgh. However, charter or excursion rail service is available in some of these areas where normal passenger rail service may not be. Some communities in northern Georgia, eastern Tennessee, and parts of Pennsylvania have rail services that permit sightseeing excursions and short destination trips. While other communities, such as Erwin, Tennessee, are seeking to add similar excursions, railroads may sometimes be reluctant to accommodate additional trips due to liability concerns, as well as the possible disruptions to commercial freight traffic.

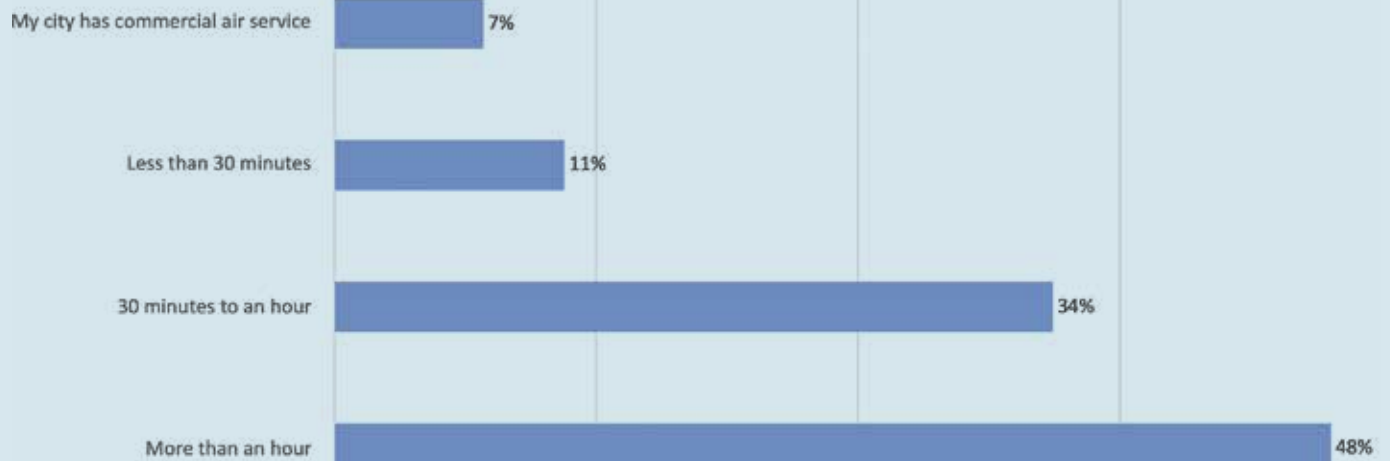
Air service is also limited throughout much of the Region. Almost half of the stakeholders surveyed reported living more than an hour from an airport served by a major airline. Only 7% of stakeholders lived in cities with access to these services. While many stakeholders expressed a desire to have an airport near their communities, it is unlikely that commercial service will be extended outside of the Region's major cities. Smaller communities should instead work to improve access to regional air services through improved roads and an increase in shuttle services.

Appalachia is fortunate to be home to two of the nation's largest river systems. The Ohio and Tennessee rivers form in the Region and are capable of handling both commercial and passenger vessels. However, today there are few commercial vessels that travel on Appalachia's major rivers. Two examples are the American Queen Steamboat Company and the American Cruise Line, both of which offer a handful of river cruises. While a small number of communities, such as Marietta, Ohio, benefit from these boats, many others are bypassed due to a lack of facilities to accommodate large passenger boats, while some, such as Point Pleasant, West Virginia, have the facilities but do not necessarily receive a great deal of boat traffic. Communities along these rivers should consider investing in facilities to accommodate large passenger boats, and those with existing facilities in place should work to capitalize on the traffic they do receive; for example, by providing shuttle services or special offers to boat passengers.

Somewhat ironically, this decrease in the use of passenger vessels in Appalachia has been decreasing while river cruising is increasing in popularity in other parts of the world. European cities currently find themselves inundated with

⁵⁶ Kevin Fang, Asha Agrawal, and Ashley Hooper, "How and Where Should I Ride This Thing? "Rules of the Road" For Personal Transportation Devices," Mineta Transportation Institute, San Jose State University, May 2019.

f8.12 Distance to commercial air services among tourism stakeholders



river cruises, with some even struggling to accommodate the traffic. Tourists from the United States are flocking to villages on the Elbe, Rhine, and Volga rivers while Appalachian river communities struggle to attract visitors.⁵⁷

One reason for this may lie with the Passenger Vessel Services Act of 1886. This legislation, enacted during the Cleveland administration, requires that vessels operating between domestic ports be constructed in the United States, be owned by American citizens, and carry an American crew. These restrictions, now 133 years old, severely limit river tourism in the entire country.⁵⁸

Major international river cruise companies, such as Viking River Cruises or Uniworld, typically rely on standardized European-built vessels staffed by experienced international crew members. Operating on American waters would require a significant departure from their successful model; not surprisingly, many of these companies have been reluctant to do so. In fact, in 2017, Viking abandoned plans to begin operating river cruises in the United States, citing the

Passenger Vessel Services Act as having a large impact on their decision.⁵⁹ Recently, however, Viking announced it would begin limited cruising on the Mississippi River in 2022.

The legislation also makes cruising on United States rivers prohibitively expensive. In most cases, a traveler can fly to Europe and cruise down the Rhine or Danube for significantly less than a similar cruise on the Ohio or Tennessee rivers. A



f8.13

Point Pleasant, West Virginia, has the port facilities to host river cruise vessels, but receives few visitors.

⁵⁷ Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, "Annual Report, 2018: Inland Navigation In Europe ,Market Observation, 113-123: Jeri Clausung, "Are Europe's busy waterways too crowded?," Travel Weekly, May 30, 2019.

⁵⁸ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "What Every Member of the Trade Community Should Know About: The Passenger Vessel Services Act," April 2010.

⁵⁹ Paul Brady, "Viking Bets on the Future with New Cruise Ship Set to Sail the Mississippi River by 2022," Travel and Leisure, July 23, 2020. <https://wqad.com/2017/12/08/viking-cruises-mississippi-river-plans-in-jeopardy/>.



ten-day European cruise with Viking can be found, with airfare, for \$3,500, which is \$1,000 less than a comparable nine-day cruise down the Ohio River on the America Queen.⁶⁰

Water and Waste Systems

Water systems are a concern for many Appalachian communities, with these systems impacting every aspect of community life and development, including tourism. Restaurants, hotels, and nearly every other establishment need a clean, reliable source of water. Tourism facilities also require robust sewage and septic systems, especially during special events and peak operating seasons. Visitors expect potable water, clean and convenient restrooms, and, in many cases, operable and well-maintained RV dump stations. Communities should prudently consider these demands when contemplating water improvements.

Restrooms are a constant concern for both travelers and host communities. While most visitor centers have restroom facilities available, they are not always well-marked or conveniently located. Aside from visitor centers, convenient public restrooms also tend to be available in high-traffic areas. Point Pleasant, West Virginia, constructed a stand-alone restroom complex along their waterfront park area, and many other communities have taken similar actions: constructing a publicly funded and maintained restroom facility in a high-traffic area. Some communities attach these restrooms to pavilions and community centers.

Both stakeholders and visitors noted concerns related to litter. Twenty-three percent of visitors surveyed named cleanliness and litter as one of the areas most in need of improvement in the Region, ranking third in terms of concerns, behind only internet access and roadways. Litter can usually be attributed to a lack of convenient and well-serviced trash bins. The Project for Public Spaces, a downtowns advocacy group,

⁶⁰ Costs based on published fares based on a veranda stateroom, the lowest priced cabin on Viking river vessels. Viking costs do not include airfare, but the line offers discounted airfare. As a result, even with airfare, a European river cruise is still less expensive.

⁶¹ Project for Public Spaces, "Waste Receptacles," <https://www.pps.org/article/wastereceptacles>.

f8.15 Stakeholders' rating of local signage



f8.14 Convenient recycling bins, such as this unit in Berea, Kentucky, help keep local streets clean while promoting sustainability and contributing to a positive community image.

recommends two to four trash bins per block, with additional bins in high-traffic areas and near benches.⁶¹ Some communities go even further by installing recycling stations alongside their trash bins, with these bins bringing about multiple benefits for communities. Besides reducing waste and promoting sustainability, they also help create a positive image of the community for visitors and help protect the assets that attract tourists.

Signage and Wayfinding

In order to fully enjoy and experience a destination, a traveler must be able to effectively navigate it. Signage plays a critical role in welcoming visitors to a community and helping them get to local attractions, businesses, and venues. Signs can also help establish a tone for the community, helping make the destination feel inviting and navigable.

Some stakeholders noted room for improvement in the quality of signage in their communities. Less than 4% found local signs to be “excellent,” and only 40% rated them as “good” or better. Of course, the remaining 60% of local tourism stakeholders rated the signs as either “fair” or “poor.”

The best signs are clear, well-placed, and attractive. They note local districts, guide visitors to local resources, and help travelers navigate the community. Signs can also educate visitors about the community, note historic sites or



Area maps, like this example from Point Pleasant, West Virginia, can help visitors find attractions.



Confrontational or divisive signage should be avoided in tourism areas.

environmental assets, and encourage positive activities and behavior. QR codes can be placed on signs to connect visitors to additional resources. Some communities may also build NFC (near-field communications) into signage to help launch smartphone apps, make a payment, or trigger a command.

While good signage is a vital asset, signs can also sometimes have a negative impact. Outdated or poorly maintained signs can frustrate visitors. Signage can also be divisive or offensive to diverse visitors or those with different views or values. Unnecessary Confederate imagery, political placards, and confrontational messages should be avoided in tourism areas.

Broadband and Telecommunications

Broadband access is vital for both visitors and tourism vendors. It helps visitors navigate their trips, share their activities, and review their experiences. At the same time, high speed internet gives vendors and destinations a way to promote and market their attractions. It also helps vendors make sales using credit cards and via e-commerce.

Because of these joint benefits, travelers and stakeholders are united in their enthusiasm for improved broadband access throughout Appalachia. Both groups also share in some frustration regarding the current state of Appalachia's online access, with broadband emerging as a major concern for both visitors and stakeholders. Nearly half of all stakeholders surveyed considered improved broadband to be "extremely important" for tourism development; in total, 86% rated it as at least "important."

Visitors also expressed a desire for improved internet access. Thirty percent of visitors surveyed reported a level of dissatisfaction with broadband and wireless access, which was the highest level of dissatisfaction—by far—for any of the services and amenities included in the survey.

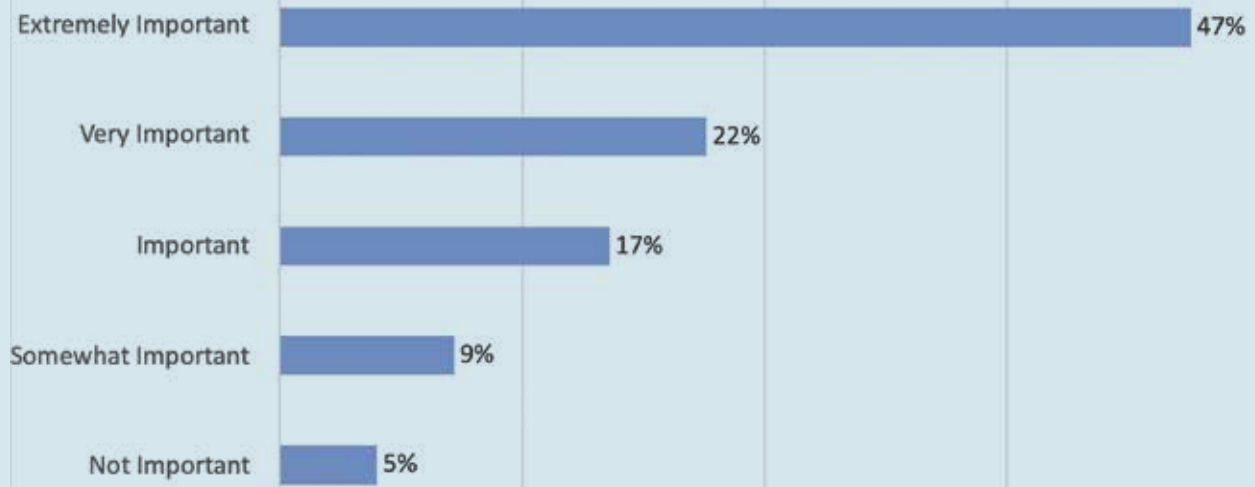
These findings reflect current broadband access conditions across the Region. While telecommunications access has improved significantly across Appalachia in recent years, access to cellular services and affordable broadband remains an issue for some communities, even in areas with purported availability. For example, a recent report commissioned by Microsoft found a wide disparity between availability status and adoption rates. The study found that while broadband was reportedly available to 97.1% of residents in Tishomingo County, Mississippi, only 3.6% of residents used the internet at broadband speeds.⁶²

Communities that successfully expand broadband access can see significant benefits accrue to their tourism industries. Williamson, West Virginia, for example, uses their expanded

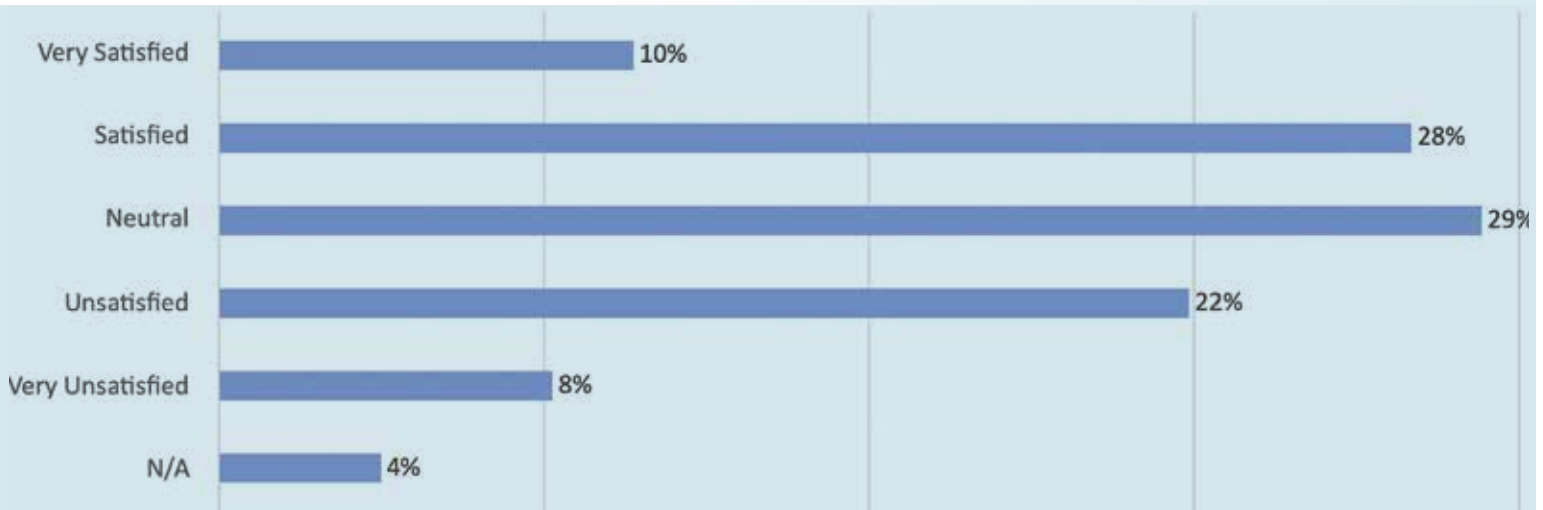
⁶² John Kahan, "It's time for a new approach for mapping broadband data to better serve Americans" <https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2019/04/08/its-time-for-a-new-approach-for-mapping-broadband-data-to-better-serve-americans/>; "An Update on Connecting Rural America: Microsoft Corporation, "The 2018 Microsoft Airband Initiative," https://blogs.microsoft.com/uploads/prod/sites/5/2018/12/MSFT-Airband_InteractivePDF_Final_12.3.18.pdf.

⁶³ Mountain Top Media, "'Greater Williamson WiFi Weekends' launches in Mingo County," June 7, 2018, <http://mountain-topmedia.com/greater-williamson-wifi-weekends-launches-in-mingo-county/>.

f8.18 The importance of broadband for tourism growth, according to stakeholders



f8.19 Visitor satisfaction, broadband and wireless services



access to improve the visitor experience, with the town having recently launched Williamson WiFi Weekends, a program that gives free wireless access to downtown visitors during weekend hours. While the project is designed to help improve local events, such as the annual Hatfield McCoy Marathon, it will also serve regular visitors and encourage local residents to patronize downtown businesses. As such, it also serves as a cost-effective marketing tool.⁶³

The Built Environment

As a rule of thumb, people generally want to vacation in places that look at least as good as where they came from, if not better. As such, a well-maintained built environment is important when it comes to creating a viable and welcoming destination. A community's built environment includes its buildings, homes, parks, and other human-made spaces. This environment is usually built up over time to accommodate the



Derelict and abandoned buildings, such as this former nursing school in Williamson, West Virginia, can become a visible barrier to tourism development.



Vacant infill lots, like the one above, instill images of decline and neglect.



Jamestown transformed this space into a performance and seating area.



A compact park in Jamestown.

needs of the local population, and it's generally maintained and regulated by local codes and property owners.

Population change in some parts of the Appalachian Region has led to issues related to the built environment. Declining populations in some areas, particularly in Central Appalachia, have led to a surplus of homes and other buildings.

Williamson, West Virginia, for example, now has less than one-third of the residents it had in 1930. Another example is Huntington, West Virginia, which now claims 39,000 fewer residents than it had just after World War II.

The visible results of these population shifts are often empty storefronts, vacant homes, and overgrown properties. Many times these fall into the hands of landlords, who may lack the resources or incentives to maintain them. Collapsed or demolished downtown buildings result in unsightly and vacant infill lots. Empty and underutilized spaces can often lead to criminal activity, increased fire risks, and vermin issues, making them a public nuisance, and sometimes even a threat to public health and safety. Too many of these types of buildings and infill lots may contribute to a sense of unease among visitors.

In most cities, local codes are used to hold property owners accountable for property conditions, with owners facing fines, liens, or seizures if their buildings are not properly maintained. Codes officers are typically the ones enforcing these laws, helping to maintain a secure and stable built environment. In smaller or economically distressed communities, maintaining the built environment can be more challenging; simply put, these communities often lack the capacity for routine and robust codes enforcement. Smaller jurisdictions may also face political constraints when dealing with these issues, including perceptions of property rights.

Small rural communities in the western United States, which often face similar issues, have begun using shared codes enforcement services to help improve their built environment. Some communities in Utah now share private consultants to manage their codes enforcement. This approach has two advantages. First, it increases their capacity at reduced costs. Second, it helps insulate public officials from political fallout, since the enforcement officer is not a public employee.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Rural Planning Group, "Code Enforcement: Recommendations for Small Towns," Utah Department of Housing and Community Development, February, 2016. <http://www.ruralplanning.org>.



Some states are also helping address these issues. West Virginia created a BAD (Brownfield, Abandoned, Dilapidated) Building Program that provides technical assistance to communities dealing with neglected properties. The program is associated with the state's Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic, a service provided by West Virginia University that assists communities with planning and land-use issues. The WVU program recently announced the creation of a new initiative to provide financial assistance to communities needing help with codes enforcement.⁶⁵

Some communities are also taking innovative steps at the local level to help address the appearance of blight. Jamestown, New York stands out for their efforts. Officials in Jamestown successfully confronted unsightly buildings and spaces through robust codes enforcement and programs designed to improve vacant spaces. City officials, working with local stakeholders, transformed infill lots into public spaces. Officials also undertook a campaign to fill vacant window spaces, making empty buildings look used and purposeful.

For a complete description of these efforts, please see the case study of Jamestown located on page 192.

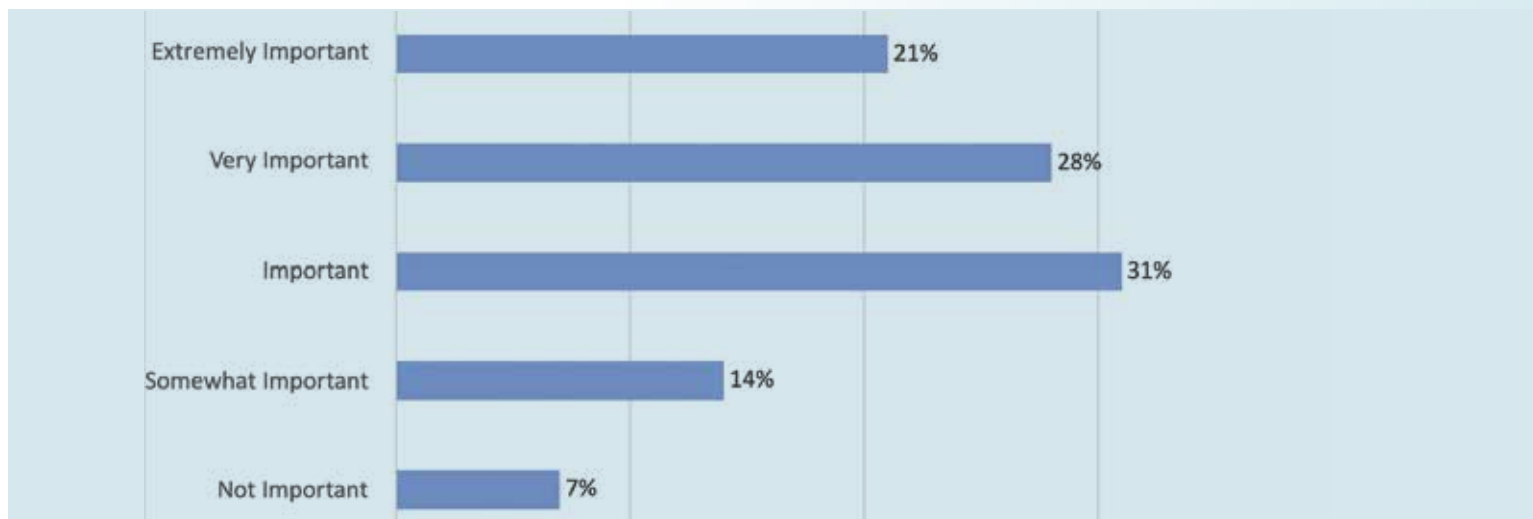
Stakeholders overwhelmingly recognized the importance of a well-managed built environment when it comes to tourism development. Seventy-nine percent of stakeholders surveyed felt that planning and zoning play an important role in tourism growth in their communities (almost half of all respondents said that it was “very” or “extremely important”).

While there is near-universal agreement on the importance of planning and zoning, the ability of communities to develop and

Building codes should be enacted and enforced, and small communities should consider shared enforcement services.

⁶⁵ “West Virginia Bad Buildings Program,” www.wvbadbuildings.org.

f8.24 The importance of planning and zoning for tourism growth, according to stakeholders



implement plans varies considerably. Smaller communities may lack the capacity to create quality plans. While assistance is available in many states through local development districts and other providers, some areas may still lack access to these resources. Even when plans are created, the ability to maintain and implement them over time may not be present. States should expand access to planning services for rural communities and work to improve planning capacity across the Region.

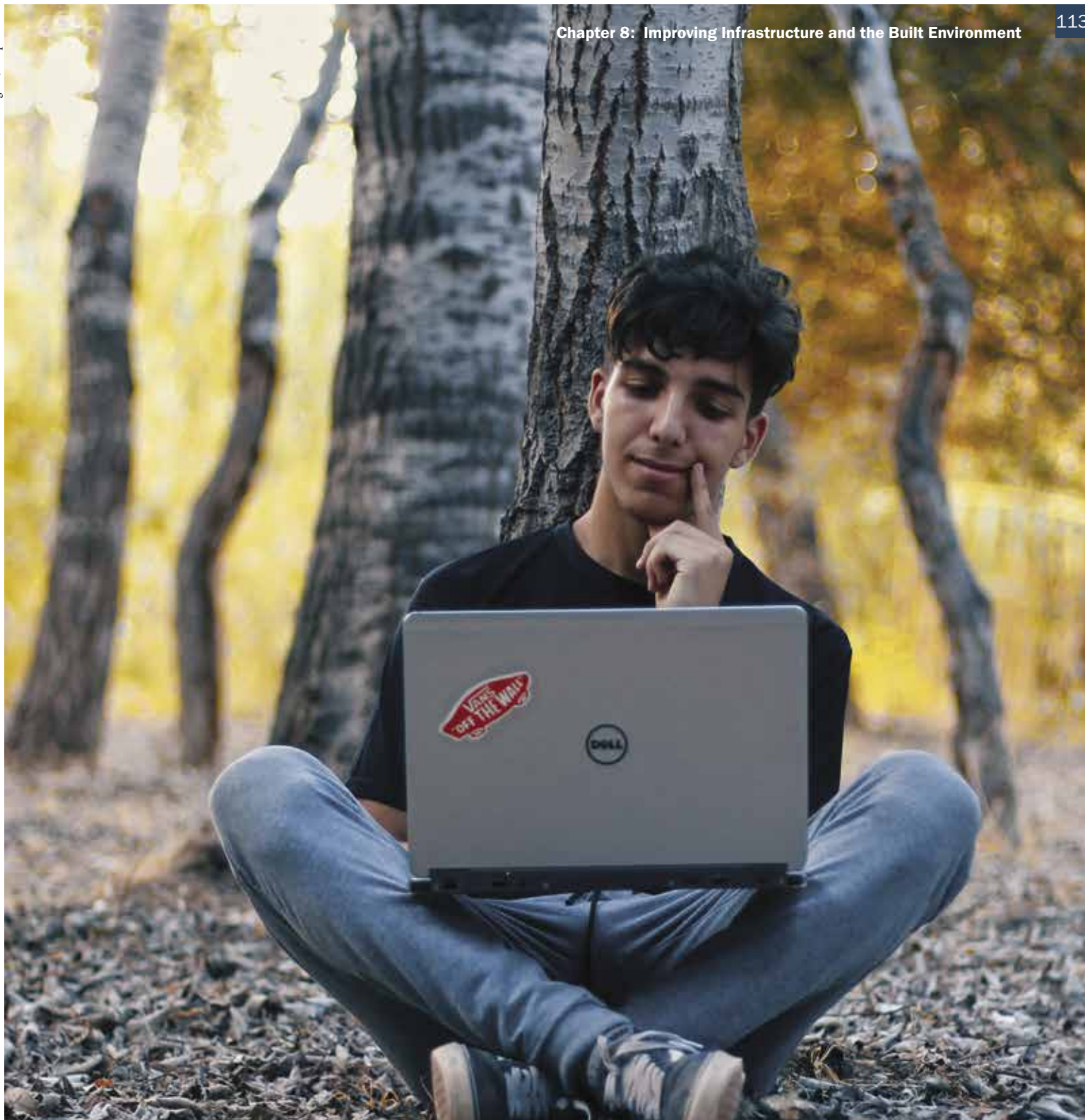
Analysis

Infrastructure plays a vital role in helping communities develop, promote, and sustain their tourism activities. However, as with other aspects of the tourism industry, the nature of infrastructure is changing. While roads and water systems remain very important, communities must also consider broadband, public transportation, and micromobility. Some final thoughts include the following:

- Communities should look at transportation holistically—it is a complex system composed of many elements. In addition to roads, local leaders should take note of parking, pedestrian paths, and alternative modes of transportation. Mass transit, even on a limited scale, can significantly benefit both visitors and local residents.
- Appalachian communities should prepare for the future by evaluating their EV infrastructure. Where appropriate, efforts should promote the installation of EV charging

stations along the ADHS, as well as at tourism facilities (i.e., state parks, artisan centers, and welcome centers).

- While micromobility is mostly limited to large cities, these modes of transport (e.g., electric scooters and shared bicycles) will soon become more commonplace in smaller, more rural communities. These communities would be well-served to study the issues associated with these technologies and prepare accordingly.
- The Passenger Vessel Services Act is legislation that deserves reexamination. As it currently stands, it creates a significant barrier to river tourism in the Region.
- While quality signage is important for both visitors and local establishments, divisive or inappropriate signs can create an unwelcoming atmosphere. Communities should discourage these types of signs, particularly in tourism areas.
- Broadband is an essential element for tourism marketing and development. Affordable and accessible broadband access should be a priority throughout the Region.
- Cities and towns should proactively regulate and monitor their built environment. Building codes should be enacted and enforced, and small communities should consider shared enforcement services.



The nature of infrastructure is changing: while roads and water systems remain very important, communities must also consider broadband, public transportation, and micromobility.

Case Study: Marietta, Ohio

Marietta, Ohio, was America's first gateway to the West. As the first settlement in the Northwest Territory, the Ohio River town led the settlement movement in the late eighteenth century.

Marietta has a long history as both a river port and an industrial city. It is the birthplace of American Marietta, a major construction materials company that later became part of Martin Marietta, which is now a subsidiary of Lockheed Martin. Located at the confluence of the Ohio and Muskingum rivers, the community was also an active river port. It is also home to Marietta College, a historic and well-respected liberal arts institution.



Downtown Marietta's streets are a beautiful tribute to their history.

“We have been able to preserve most of our beautiful and diverse architecture.”
– Local Stakeholder



A Native American burial mound provides a historical connection and allows visitors to learn more about Marietta's past. Photograph from Wikipedia Commons by Thomas F. Banks.

Marietta is best known for heritage tourism, boasting a number of frontier and Native American sites. Visitors also flock to its historic neighborhoods, which are well protected by preservation codes and historic district zoning. Increasingly, however, younger families have focused much more on outdoor recreation and activities such as biking, hiking, and kayaking. Still, older travelers are the most common visitors. In many cases, these guests do not stay overnight, which impacts hotel taxes and revenue. They also typically do not spend as much as young families.

The Importance of Infrastructure

The town boasts excellent tourism infrastructure. Resources include a variety of restaurants, a historic riverfront hotel, and a complement of museums, parks, and other attractions. Given these establishments and investments, it is not surprising that the number of museum visitors has doubled in recent years. To make the community more welcoming to these guests, Marietta has addressed some concerns:

- The diversity of restaurants has increased.
- Infrastructure has been improved, including sidewalks and lighting in the downtown area.
- The focus on Native American history has continued.
- Bike lanes have been added to the downtown area.
- Trails have been modernized throughout the area.

Marietta, Ohio



COUNTY FACTS

County	Washington
Population (2017) ¹	60,418
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$29,810
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	6.4%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	15.5%
ARC status (2020) ²	Transitional

CITY FACTS

Founded (Marietta) ³	1788
Miles to interstate (I-77) ⁴	7
Miles to state capitol (Columbus, OH) ⁴	125
Miles to nearest metro area (Parkersburg, WV) ⁴	16
Miles to nearest commercial airport (John Glenn, Columbus) ⁴	125

SOURCES

¹ "The Appalachian Region." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² "Socioeconomic Data." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ "Marietta, Ohio." Accessed at http://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Marietta,_Ohio

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

Much of the city's tourism is also based on the community's riverfront heritage. Since 1976, the annual Ohio River Sternwheeler Festival has grown significantly, and it now attracts more than 100,000 visitors during the second weekend of September. This unique event attracts 30 to 35 sternwheelers to the riverfront annually.⁶⁶

The city has the potential to serve as a hub for river cruising. These efforts, however, are made more difficult by the Passenger Services Vessels Act, legislation from 1886 that mandates the use of American crews and American-made riverboats.

A Changing Demographic

As a college town, Marietta exhibits more diversity than much of the surrounding area. This status, while commendable, has created some challenges in the community. In one incident, foreign students were harassed while crossing a city street. Local businesses were quick to respond and began hosting "meet and greet" events for local residents, students, and visitors. They have also expressed interest in attracting a more diverse group of visitors.

To attract younger visitors, stakeholders are leveraging the rivers, riverfront areas, and trails. In 2011, the Marietta Adventure Company (MAC), a full-service bike and paddle shop, opened to cater to outdoor enthusiasts. The owner of MAC was also a founding organizer of the "Rivers, Trails and Ales Festival" and has worked to grow the Marietta City Trail System into a 30-mile network of single-track mountain bike trails within the City of Marietta. As a local tourism official exclaimed, "There is nothing but opportunity on our beautiful riverfronts!"

Other steps taken to expand visitation include the following:

- Efforts have started to connect Marietta as a destination to the surrounding waterways.
- Bike lanes and trails have been created or improved.
- Tapping into new markets and new visitors (i.e., younger populations) have begun to gain traction.
- Linking local museums and historic sites through interpretive signage and media is underway.



f2

The Ohio River Sternwheeler Festival's events are accessible by boats on the river, as well as by people along the shore. Photograph by Mike Tewkesbury: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/7687126@N06/4975018809>



f3

Traditionally a heritage destination, Marietta is developing outdoor recreation and adventure activities.



f4

Signage clearly identifies the history of Marietta's contribution to the Underground Railroad.

⁶⁶ <http://ohioriversternwheelfestival.org/about-us/festival-history/>



- Marietta has been connecting visitors to the 64,000 acres of the Wayne National Forest, promoting their city as a trailhead community.

Though the Marietta Convention and Visitors Bureau was founded in 1962, the community has not developed a unified message. It is imperative that a unified strategic vision for the Marietta area be developed to capitalize on its many opportunities.

Work Remains

Though the town has experienced much success related to tourism, future efforts would be made more effective by further improvements, such as the following:

- Efforts to make the downtown area compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) need to be continued.
- A more unified community plan for the future should be designed.
- A strategic plan with contributions from government, local business owners, community members, and visitors should be developed.
- More tourist-friendly signage should be added along the gateways, connecting the points of interest to the interstate and regional routes.

Many people moved to the Mid-Ohio Valley when their employers relocated there. For that reason, the identity of Marietta is difficult to define. Some residents consider themselves Appalachians, while others resist the label. As

such, any development plan should include input from local residents, from which there might be differing viewpoints regarding the future of Marietta.

As in many communities, paying for these improvements can be challenging. As a relatively successful and well-established destination, Marietta may be considered a low-priority for assistance. Local residents, however, stress that maintaining success is sometimes as difficult as achieving it. Assistance is still needed in communities like Marietta, where it should be noted that tourism growth spills over into neighboring areas.

Lessons Learned

As a mature destination, Marietta offers many lessons for other communities in the Region. These include the following:

- Marietta has centered much of its tourism development around a central theme—its river legacy. This enhances the authenticity of the community.
- When the community encountered intolerance, it acted quickly and proactively to welcome and promote diversity.
- Local officials recognized the importance of outdoor recreation and made investments to grow this segment of their tourism portfolio.
- Marietta's downtown investments have created a thriving environment for visitors. It should serve as a model for other communities.
- Maintaining success is challenging, and even well-established communities like Marietta still need support.

9 Promoting and Protecting Natural Assets

The natural environment is the foundation of the Appalachian tourism industry. The Region's mountains, rivers, lakes, and wildlife provide abundant opportunities for visitors to experience one of the earth's great forested areas. The vast majority of visitors to the Region—86%—participate in some form of outdoor recreation. These activities range from the passive, such as simply taking in the scenery, to traditional pursuits, like camping or hiking, and even “outdoor adventure” activities such as rock climbing or mountain biking.

If outdoor recreation is the basis for much of Appalachia's tourism, then public lands are the foundation of outdoor recreation and the bedrock of the Region's travel industry.

While visitors expressed preferences for a wide range of recreational pursuits, there was near-universal enthusiasm for the natural beauty of Appalachia. Only one respondent to the visitor survey expressed any dissatisfaction with the Region's scenery; 82% of respondents were “very satisfied” with Appalachia's natural beauty, and 43% mentioned nature or natural sites as the “best part” of their trip. Responses included the following:

“Seeing the natural beauty of the area.”

“I enjoy being outside in this region; the mountains, rivers, trails, forests, etc.”

“How beautiful Appalachia is. Surprised to see how large the Appalachia is. The people.”

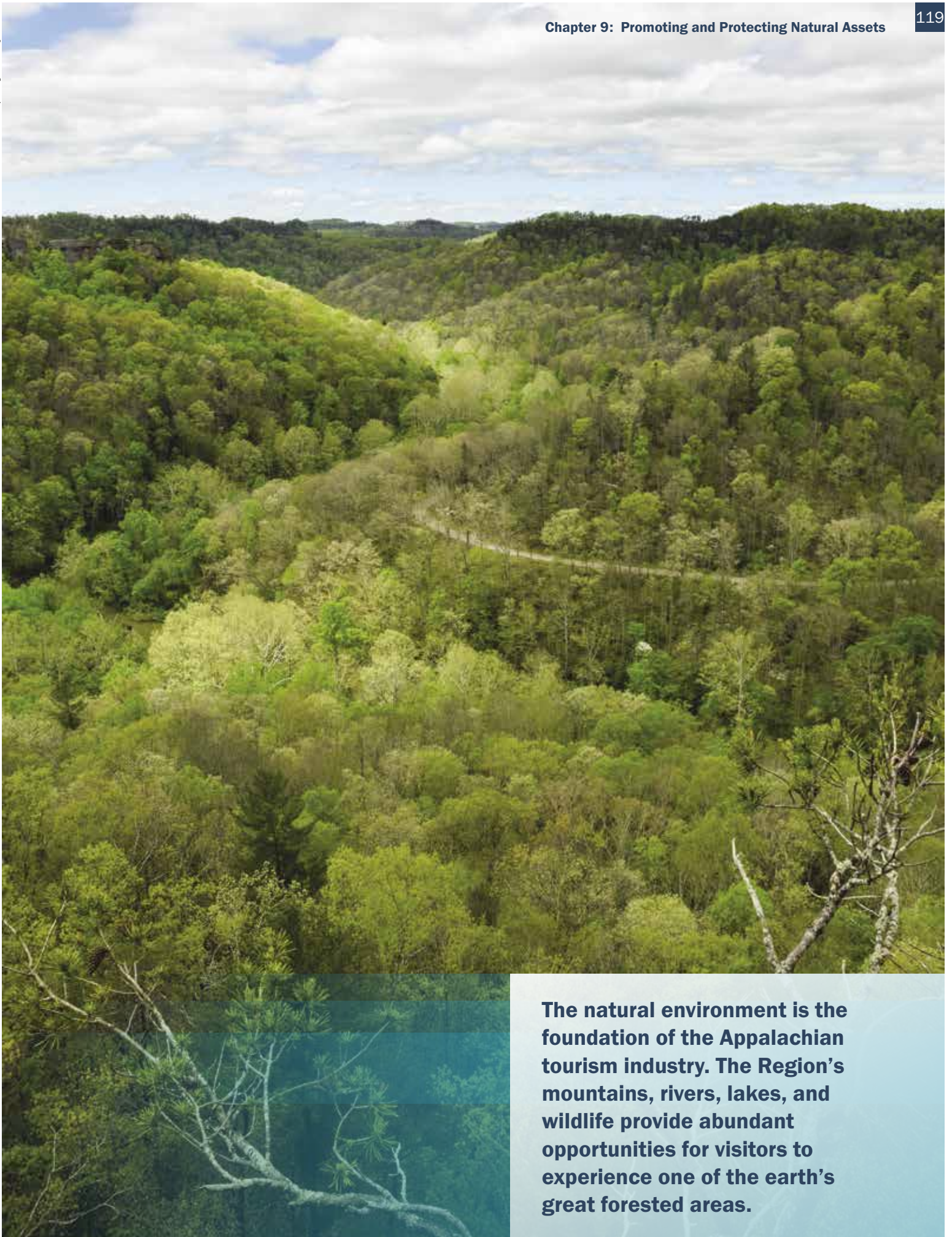
“Clean air, beautiful scenery, less traffic.”

Travelers were also pleased with the Region's outdoor recreational facilities; about 85% of visitors surveyed were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with these amenities. Facilities or attractions noted by visitors included state and national park campgrounds, bike and motorcycle routes, hiking trails, and whitewater rafting sites.

Public Lands

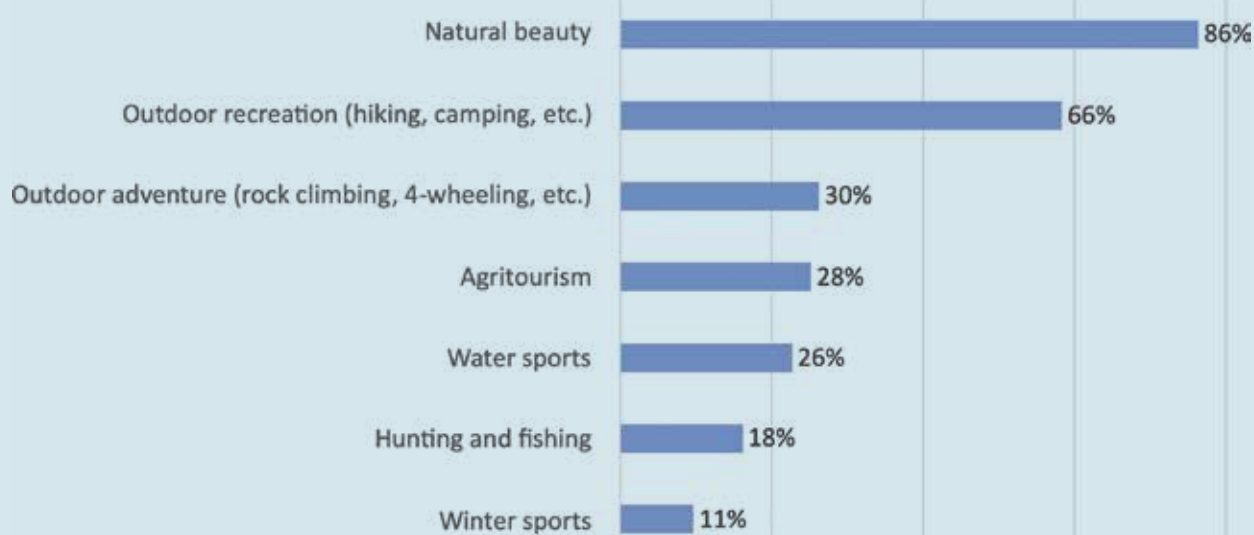
If outdoor recreation is the basis for much of Appalachia's tourism, then public lands are the foundation of outdoor recreation and the bedrock of the Region's travel industry. Public lands include a vast range of entities and include national parks and forests; state parks and forests; local and municipal parks; rivers and shorelines; publicly owned lakes and shorelines; battlefields; and wildlife management areas.

These lands spread across all of Appalachia. Eighty-six percent of stakeholders surveyed reported having public lands in their county, and 80% of visitors planned to visit public lands while traveling in Appalachia.



The natural environment is the foundation of the Appalachian tourism industry. The Region's mountains, rivers, lakes, and wildlife provide abundant opportunities for visitors to experience one of the earth's great forested areas.

f9.1 Interest in outdoor recreational activities among Appalachian visitors



In addition to publicly owned lands, Appalachia also includes vast tracts of privately held property that are open, at least to some degree, to public use. These include timber tracts, mining lands, and reclaimed mine sites. Often these sites are used for managed recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, and ATV trail riding.

Reclaimed Lands

As stated previously, privately held recreation areas include reclaimed former mine sites. These sites often have the potential for a “second life” as economic assets, with many areas that were once used for resource extraction now being havens for outdoor recreation. Notable examples include the American Electric Power (AEP) sites in Southeast Ohio. These include the ReCreation Land, a 58,000-acre destination with camping sites, hiking and bike trails, and ample areas for hunting and fishing.

AEP also operates The Wilds, a 10,000-acre wildlife preserve created in partnership with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and several zoos in Ohio. The open-air park, which features one of the largest white rhino breeding programs in the nation, attracts over 100,000 visitors per year and includes a full range of educational and programming activities. The destination also offers lodging, including rental cabins and luxury yurts.

The AEP sites show the potential for adaptive reuse of reclaimed mining lands as tourism destinations. Communities across the region should view them as models of adaptive reuse and environmental remediation. It is important to remember, however, that these sites did not develop overnight or without assistance. These success stories are the product of decades of work and investment by diverse groups of partners.

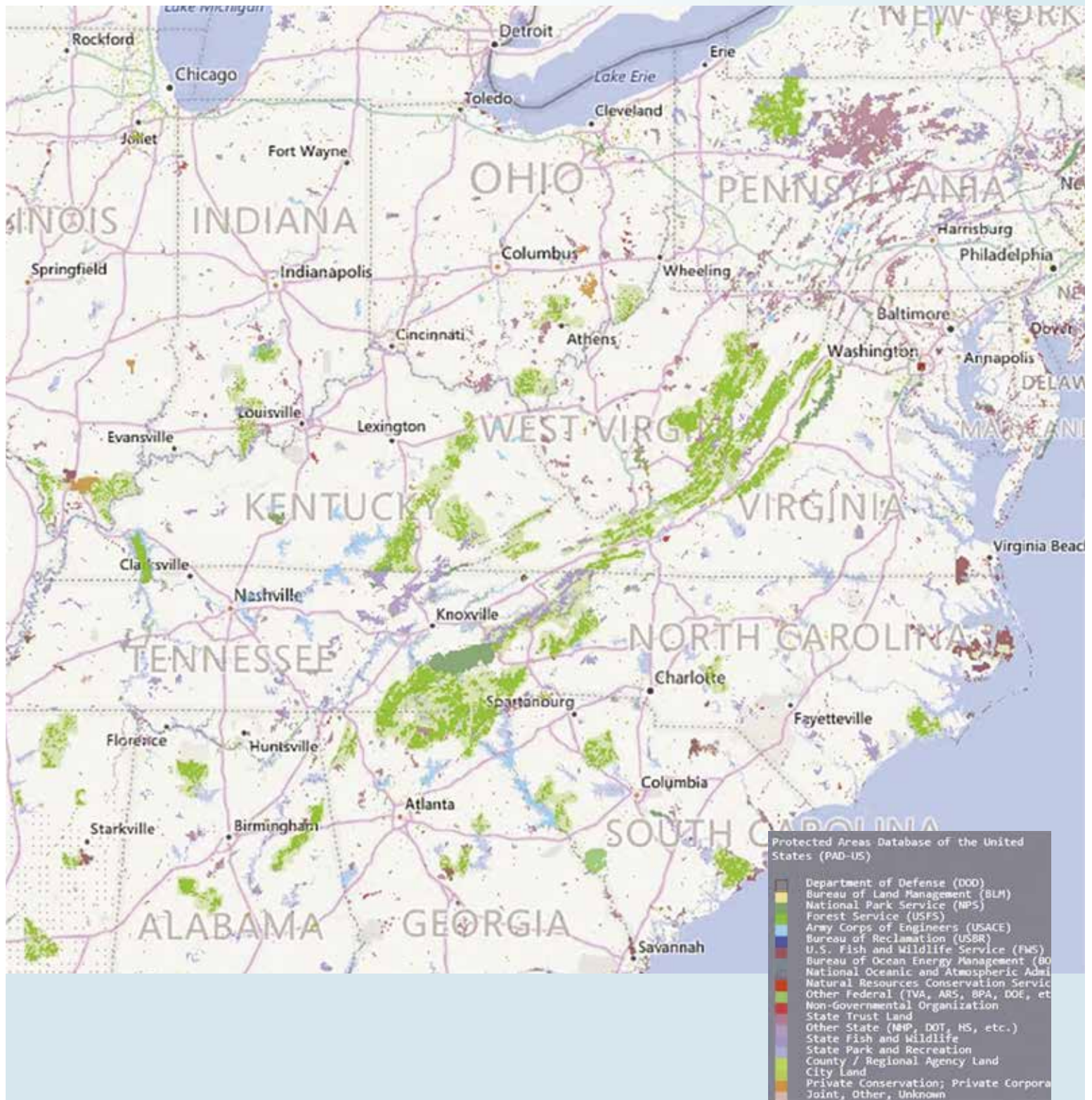
Hiking and Bike Trails

Appalachia is fortunate to have thousands of miles of trails. These trails vary considerably in size and scope, ranging from the Appalachian Trail to local paths and greenways. They also include other types of pathways, such as rails-to-trails projects, ATV and bike trails, and mixed-use routes that accommodate pedestrians, horses, and mechanized transit modes.

The most popular and most common trails in the region are hiking trails. Eighty-six percent of survey participants took part in outdoor recreation, which includes hiking. Hiking also featured prominently among visitors’ comments. One traveler wrote, “We always look forward to finding new restaurants and new places to hike.” Another expressed excitement about “all the hiking available” at West Virginia’s Snowshoe Resort.

Visitors also expressed considerable enthusiasm for bike trails. Notably, visitors cited the Virginia Creeper Trail as a

f9.2 Public lands comprise a significant portion of the Appalachian Region and dominate much of the popular Appalachian Highlands area. Source: United States Geological Survey Protected Areas Database.





The Wilds features luxury yurts for visitors interested in “glamping.” Image Courtesy Columbus Zoo.

<https://columbuszoo.org/job-details/wilds/seasonal?job=6062cd32-bd2f-67d7-bdc2-ff0000bf4b43>



On a fall day the Virginia Creeper Trail can attract as many as three thousand visitors. Photo Courtesy

National Forest Service. <https://explorebeaufortsc.com/beaufort-county-just-made-kayaking-easier/>



The Kentucky Trail Town program assists municipalities in creating quality trail visitor experiences.



ATVs and other off-road vehicles can bring significant economic benefits to a community, but they also raise important environmental and safety concerns.

favorite destination. This Virginia rails-to-trails project runs from Abingdon to Damascus and has helped revitalize both communities. The impact on Damascus has been especially profound. A 2011 analysis by Virginia Tech found that the project has had a “significant” economic impact on the community, with over half of local businesses attributing 61% or more of their sales to trail users.⁶⁷

Other studies have also confirmed the value of trail systems. A recent study of trail towns in western Pennsylvania, for example, found that the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail had an overall annual economic impact of \$7.48 million, and 70% of expanding businesses along the trail attributed their growth to trail revenues. The same study credited the Allegheny Passage Trail, which connects Pittsburgh and Cumberland, Maryland, with the creation of 65 new businesses and over 270 jobs.⁶⁸

Given these outcomes, it is little wonder that states are promoting trails among Appalachian communities. Kentucky is at the forefront of this effort. The state has created a trail town certification program and a workbook for prospective communities. The program is notable for requiring certified towns to engage local leaders and residents, and also for requiring participating municipalities to meet standards for such things as planning, signage, marketing, and evaluation. To date, this program has led to the creation of 17 certified locations across the state, including 13 in the Appalachian Region.⁶⁹

Stakeholders from trail communities expressed two main concerns related to trail tourism. One, as described in the previous chapter, concerned the difficulty of connecting trail users with the local businesses and amenities. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8, connectors, shuttles, signage, and digital media are being used to help address this issue.

The second chief concern is the issue of trail safety. While trail crime is rare, incidents can be tragic. Hikers, for the most part, do an effective job of reporting incidents and suspicious activities, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, for example, has multiple mechanisms for reporting concerns or incidents.

⁶⁷ Virginia Tech University Economic Development Studio, “Building Connectivity Through Recreation Trails,” December 2011, 18-22.

⁶⁸ Trail Town Program, “Economic Impact of Regional Trails,” <https://www.trailtowns.org/research>.

⁶⁹ “Kentucky Trail Town Workbook,” <http://krta.ky.gov/docs/Trail-Town-Program-Workbook-2014.pdf>.

f9.7 Parts of Appalachia have high ATV fatality rates.

Where People Die on ATVs

1982 through 2013 — 32 years



Communities considering ATV tourism should stress safety and prepare for potential accidents.

Source: Consumer Products Safety Commission, <https://onsafety.cpsc.gov/blog/2018/05/18/cpsc-infographic-atv-deaths-injuries/>.

The National Park Service has a hotline to report suspicious activities, and they have also launched a trail safety program. The program, Trail Safe!, is designed for trail volunteers but available to anyone who's interested. The program includes training modules on accident avoidance, situational awareness, communications, and decision-making.⁷⁰

While these efforts are laudable, more research needs to be conducted to improve trail safety. The transient nature of hikers and the remote conditions in some areas make identifying and prosecuting potential threats very difficult. Tourism agencies

should partner with law enforcement experts to identify and disseminate best practices related to trail security.

ATV/ORV Trails

ATV (all-terrain vehicle) and ORV (off-road vehicle) tourism is growing in popularity, especially in Central Appalachia. As demonstrated in the Williamson, West Virginia case study, communities in this area have found that former mining and timber roads are readily adaptable for use as ATV trails. These communities have also found that ATV enthusiasts are valuable visitors. They often make use of local lodging and dining, purchase supplies and fuel locally, and make frequent use of local services, such as car washes and repair facilities.

⁷⁰ <https://www.nps.gov/noco/trail-safe.htm>



Many communities also report increased ATV sales, both in trail communities and in the Region's more urban areas. These sales generate considerable sales tax revenues for both state and local governments.

A study of the Hatfield-McCoy Trails System in West Virginia found that visitors to the trails had a direct annual economic impact of \$1.7 million and a total impact of more than \$3.3 million in 2014. When combined with the use of the trail by local residents, the report estimated a total economic impact of over \$22 million per year for the trail system—a 74% increase since the trail was first evaluated in 2006. These results mirror findings from similar systems outside of the Appalachian Region, with ATV/ORV venues in Wisconsin and Minnesota reporting similar results.⁷¹

⁷¹ Elizabeth Pardue and Jennifer Shand, "The Economic Impact of the Hatfield McCoy Trail System in West Virginia," Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research, 2014; "Economic Data for ATVs and UTVs (links to multiple studies)," Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association, <https://www.watva.org/index.php/where-to-ride/economic-impact-studies>; Ernesto Venegas, "Economic Impact of Recreational Trail Use," University of Minnesota Tourism Center, November 2009.

A 2009 study of all types of trails in Minnesota found that ATV trails were the fourth highest revenue-producing type of trail in the state, behind walking/hiking, bicycles, and snowmobiles. Snowmobile trails were similar to ATV sites in terms of both user demographics and economic benefits. These findings reinforce the benefits of recreational snowmobile activities in the Northern Appalachia subregion.⁷²

Successful trail systems, it should be noted, are the result of strong partnerships and often require substantial investments of time, money, and labor. The Hatfield-McCoy system, for example, was built upon a strong partnership with regional landowners and required extensive liability protections, including insurance, law enforcement, and professional management services. Participating communities had to enact changes in their local codes to allow for controlled ATV use on public streets and, in some cases, liability exemptions for property owners. Many times, these efforts also required cooperation and supporting legislation and support from state government.⁷³

⁷² Vinegas, *Ibid*, 5.

⁷³ Pardue and Shand, "Hatfield-McCoy," 31.

Communities pursuing ATV trails should also work to mitigate potential conflicts and environmental impacts related to the venues. ATVs and ORVs should not share trail space with hikers, bicycles, or horses, as these uses and audiences are generally considered incompatible with one another. Interactions between these users could lead to conflicts, complaints, or significant safety risks. Communities should also be aware of the potential for traumatic injuries related to off-road vehicles, which underscores the need for these communities to have first responders and emergency care facilities in the local areas.

Communities should also weigh potential impacts on local residents, particularly when trails extend near or into established jurisdictions. Residents of Chautauqua County, New York, for example, recently voiced concerns about snowmobilers in their community. The mayor of one community complained, “They’re going along a very narrow area there, where children are out playing all the time, at very high speeds.”⁷⁴

Also notable are the environmental impacts of motorized off-road vehicles. These well-documented issues include potential damage to air quality, erosion, soil compaction, sedimentation, and even wildlife conservation. A 2011 review of research related to outdoor ATV/ORV use found that “the impacts of ATV use are cumulative, universal, and can be achieved by low-intensity traffic over short time periods.” Researchers have also stated that ATVs “can have a disproportionately high impact on land and wildlife resources because of their ability to impact a far greater number of acres over shorter time periods than more traditional forms of recreation.” “Repeated ATV use,” they argue, “can exceed the land’s ability to heal itself.”⁷⁵

Given these findings, communities should make informed decisions related to ATV trail adoption and work carefully with environmental stakeholders to limit potential impacts. They should also carefully weigh the benefits of ATV tourism against potential impacts on other tourism markets, as well as other local considerations, such as property values and public safety.

Water-Based Recreation

While only about a quarter of surveyed visitors participated in water-related activities, this subset constitutes an important segment of the Region’s tourism industry. This is especially evident in the Southern and South Central Appalachia subregions, where large lakes and whitewater waterways afford generous recreational opportunities. A 2017 assessment of 17 counties in northern Alabama identified canoeing/kayaking/rafting and fishing/fishing tournaments as “high priority” development opportunities. Tourism stakeholders in that study cited boating as the top tourism activity in the study area.⁷⁶

Other studies suggest this trend could potentially extend beyond the Southeast. A 2015 study of paddlesports across the United States found that activities such as canoeing, rafting, and kayaking have experienced steady growth in recent years, particularly among millennials and younger travelers. The same study also identified significant crossover interest in paddlesports among hikers (42% of hikers also had interest in paddlesports), campers (35%), and freshwater fishing enthusiasts (35%). It also found that the Middle Atlantic and South Atlantic regions, which include parts of several Appalachian states, enjoyed some of the highest participation rates in the nation.⁷⁷



Launch docks, such as this one in a South Carolina park, make it easier for kayakers and canoers to enjoy local waterways. *Photo courtesy Beaufort County.* <https://explorebeaufortsc.com/beaufort-county-just-made-kayaking-easier/>

⁷⁴ J.M. Lessinski, “Cassadaga Residents Upset Over Issues with Snowmobiles,” *The Post-Journal* (Jamestown, N.Y.), March 5, 2019.

⁷⁵ Patricia Stowkowski and Christopher Lapointe, “Environmental and Social Effects of ATVs and ORVs: An Annotated Bibliography and Research Assessment,” *University of Vermont School of Natural Resources*, November 2000; Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, “Cumulative and Universal: ATV Impacts on the Landscape and Wildlife,” *White Paper*, Summer 2011, 26.

⁷⁶ Auburn University Government and Economic Development Institute, “Nature-Based, Cultural, and Heritage Tourism: Strategic Planning Report for TVA,” October 2017, 52, 84.

⁷⁷ The F Coleman Company, The Outdoor Foundation, et al., “2015 Special Report on Paddlesports,” 2015

Litter is a problem across the entire United States, including Appalachia—and it's a costly one, as well, as litter cleanup is an expensive drain on state and local governments.

While the 2015 study documented growth in these segments, it also identified areas for potential expansion. As with the study of counties in northern Alabama, this research also showed low rates of participation in paddlesports in southern states, suggesting an opportunity for growth. It also noted the lack of nonwhite participation in these activities, finding that about 75–80% of participants are white. While the study did not identify reasons for this underrepresentation, it did state that it created “significant growth potential” for the segment.⁷⁸

One reason for the slow growth of paddlesports in Southern Appalachia may be the popularity of motorboats on large waterways in the area. Just as ATVs create conflicts with hikers and other trail users, motorized boats can also be incompatible with smaller, nonmotorized vessels. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recently noted increasing conflict on multiuse waterways and placed much of the blame on “a lack of awareness or understanding of the navigation rules among a large portion of recreational boat operators and by their lack of adequate boating knowledge and skills.”⁷⁹

The NTSB concluded their report with recommendations for increased education and training among all types of watercraft users. They also called for increased enforcement

of boating regulations and better management of mixed-use waterways. Communities developing water-based tourism should invest in education media and programming to help reduce potential conflicts. Some communities might also consider restricted-use water areas for paddlesports enthusiasts and the creation of “passive parks” that encourage quiet recreation.⁸⁰

Litter

While visitors to the Region expressed a great deal of enthusiasm for Appalachia’s natural amenities, many also voiced disappointment in the amount of litter encountered during their visit. Almost a fourth of visitors mentioned a need for improved cleanliness and litter control, making it the third most frequently cited concern in the visitor survey. Stakeholders also recognized the importance of litter control, with 71% of respondents feeling that litter control was “important” or higher.

Litter is defined as any type of waste thrown where it does not belong, or as coined by Keep America Beautiful: “waste out of place.” Litter is a problem across the entire United States, including Appalachia—and it’s a costly one, as well, as litter cleanup is an expensive drain on state and local governments. States throughout the Region spend millions of dollars annually to clean up litter; for example, Tennessee spends \$15 million per year to pick up litter.⁸¹ Further, litter essentially “breeds” litter, meaning that once litter begins to accumulate in a certain place, other people may begin tossing materials there, as well. To combat litter, all 13 states in Appalachia have strict regulations and significant penalties for littering; these serve not only to penalize chronic littering, but also to raise funds for public awareness and cleanup campaigns (see Figure 9.10).

For a region so intrinsically associated with natural beauty and outdoor recreation, issues related to litter may be particularly problematic. In a recent book examining ecotourism in Appalachia, the authors noted the following: “Litter and garbage are massive problems that harm the tourism industry in Appalachia... when local people dispose of trash haphazardly, it not only mars the scenery, but it also

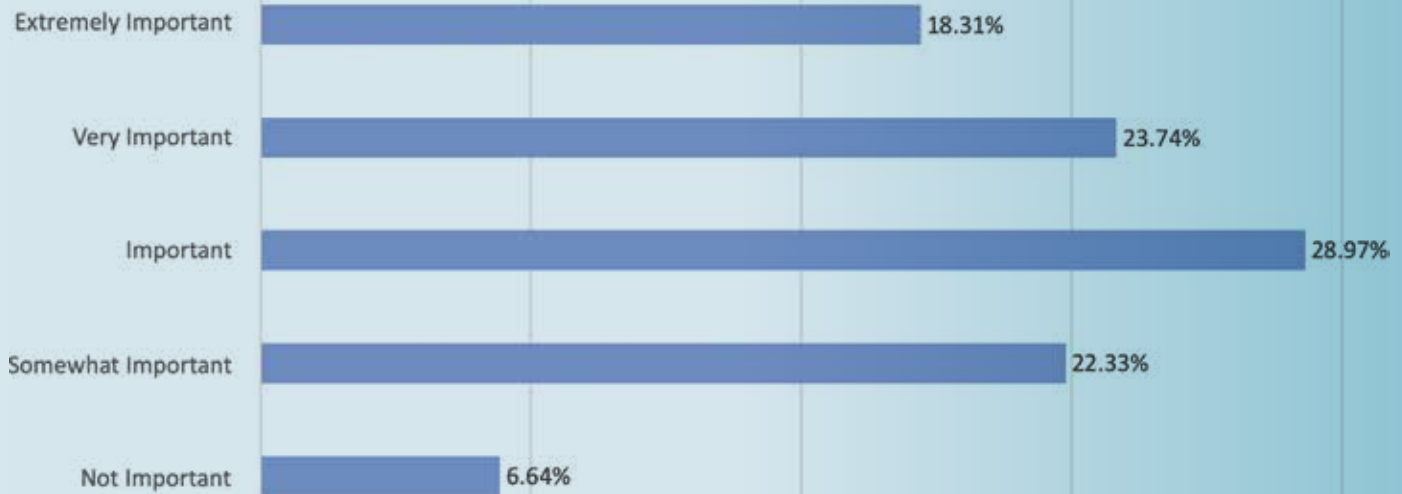
⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ National Transportation Safety Board, *Safety Recommendation Report: Shared Waterways: Safety of Recreational and Commercial Vessels in the Marine Transportation System*, January 2017, 14.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

⁸¹ Tennessee Dept. of Transportation and Keep Tennessee Beautiful, 2018. “Nobody Trashes Tennessee.” Accessed at <https://www.bristoltn.org/DocumentCenter/View/6253/Nobody-Trashes-Tennessee-Fact-Sheet-60517?bidId=>

f9.9 Importance of litter control according to tourism stakeholders



sends a signal to tourists that no one cares if they throw litter wherever the fancy strikes them.”⁸² The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), in partnership with the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, has initiated programs to educate both day-hikers and thru-hikers on outdoor techniques and practices to “leave no trace,” and to reduce inadvertent damage to the natural environment along the Trail.

A renewed focus on litter cleanups and education across Appalachia may be beneficial to the Region’s tourism industry. Litter awareness and education is not new; in fact, in 1965, Lady Bird Johnson began promotion of Keep America Beautiful’s efforts towards highway beautification, stating “Ours is a blessed and beautiful land. But much of it has been tarnished. What can you do? Look around you: at the littered roadside; at the polluted stream; the decayed city center. We need urgently to restore the beauty of our land.”⁸³

Today there are many more programs that could share best practices, like Kentucky’s Personal Responsibility in a Desirable Environment (PRIDE), or the aforementioned ATC

“Leave No Trace” program. Programs that support better signage could also help communities with litter problems, and so, too, could providing better, more visible trash and recycling bins in tourist areas. Many of these programs are comparatively inexpensive (especially in comparison to the costs of roadway and stream cleanups to collect litter), and not only do they help create positive experiences for tourists, but they also help protect Appalachia’s natural beauty.



f9.10 **Trail litter.** Photo courtesy Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics.

⁸² Al Fritsch and Kristin Johannsen, 2015. *Ecotourism in Appalachia*, University Press of Kentucky, p. 48.

⁸³ Keep America Beautiful, “Mission and History,” <https://www.kab.org/about-us/mission-history>.

Table 9.1: Litter Regulations in States in the Appalachian Region

STATE	CITATION	PENALTIES
Alabama	Ala. Code §13A-7-29	Class C misdemeanor. First conviction: \$250 minimum fine. Subsequent convictions: \$500 fine
Georgia	Ga. Code §16-7-43	Misdemeanor. Fine up to \$1,000 and/or imprisonment for up to one year (§17-10-3). Violators may also be required to pick up litter over a distance not to exceed one mile. The court may publish the names of persons convicted under the statute.
Kentucky	Ky. Rev. Stat. §512.070	Class A misdemeanor. Fine up to \$500 (§534.040).
Maryland	Md. Criminal Code Ann. §10-110	Misdemeanor. For amounts of litter not exceeding 100 pounds or 27 cubic feet and not for commercial gain: fine up to \$1,500, imprisonment up to 30 days, or both. For amounts exceeding 100 pounds or 27 cubic feet, but not exceeding 500 pounds or 216 cubic feet, and not for commercial gain: fine up to \$12,500, imprisonment up to one year, or both. For amounts exceeding 500 pounds or 216 cubic feet or in any amount for commercial gain: fine up to \$30,000, imprisonment up to five years, or both. The court may also require cleanup, repair or payment of damages, community service, and suspension of driver's license.
Mississippi	Miss. Code Ann. §97-15-29	First conviction: fine between \$50 and \$250, with the option of community service, payment of damages, removal of waste, and payment of agency costs. Subsequent convictions: minimum and maximum fines doubled.
New York	N.Y. Vehicle and Transit Law §1220	(Littering on highways and adjacent lands) First conviction: fine up to \$350 and/or a requirement to perform services for a public or not-for-profit corporation, association, institution or agency not to exceed 10 hours. Subsequent convictions: fine up to \$700 and/or a requirement to perform services for a public or not-for-profit corporation, association, institution or agency not to exceed 15 hours.
	N.Y. Railroad Law §52-e	(Littering on railway or subway tracks) First conviction: fine up to \$250 and/or community service for up to eight hours. Subsequent convictions punishable by a fine up to \$500 and/or community service for up to eight hours. Fines are deposited in the New York Subway Littering Prevention Fund.
North Carolina	N.C. Gen. Stat. §14-399	Class 3 misdemeanor. For amounts of litter not exceeding 15 pounds and not for commercial gain: fine between \$250 and \$1,000 for first conviction, with possible eight to 24 hours community service. Subsequent convictions: fine between \$500 and \$2,000, with possible 16 to 50 hours community service. For amounts exceeding 15 pounds but not exceeding 500 pounds and not for commercial gain: fine between \$500 and \$2,000, with possible 24 to 100 hours community service.
Ohio	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §3767.32	Third degree misdemeanor. The court may, in addition to or in lieu of the penalty provided, require violators to remove litter from any public or private property, or in waters of the state (§3767.99).

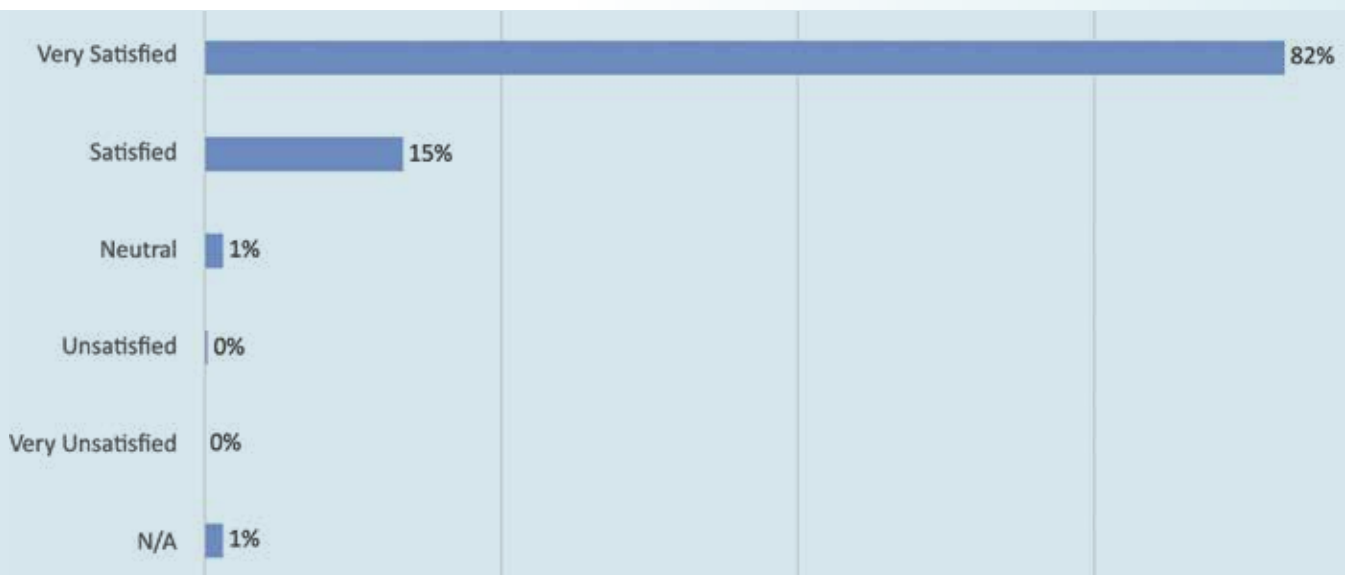
Table 9.1: Litter Regulations in States in the Appalachian Region, con't.

Pennsylvania	Pa. Cons. Stat. tit. 18, §6501	First offense: summary offense, fine between \$50 and \$300, imprisonment up to 90 days, or both. Subsequent offenses: third degree misdemeanor, fine between \$300 and \$1,000. May also be sentenced to imprisonment or required to perform up to one year of community service.
	Pa. Cons. Stat. tit. 75, §3709	Littering from a vehicle is punishable by a fine up to \$900, litter cleanup for a certain number of hours, or both.
South Carolina	S.C. Code Ann. §16-11-700	Misdemeanor. For amounts of litter less than 15 pounds or 27 cubic feet: fine of \$200 or up to 30 days imprisonment for first or second conviction. Subsequent convictions: fine of \$500 or up to 30 days imprisonment. The court may also impose eight hours of litter cleanup for first conviction, 16 hours for second conviction, and 24 hours for subsequent convictions.
Tennessee	Tenn. Code Ann. §39-14-503 <i>et seq.</i>	Litter weighing less than five pounds is a class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of \$50, imprisonment up to 30 days, or both, and up to 40 hours community service. The court may also require work in a recycling center up to eight hours. Litter weighing between five and 10 pounds is a class B misdemeanor punishable by a fine up to \$500, six months imprisonment, or both, and up to 80 hours community service. The court may also require work in a recycling center up to eight hours. Litter weighing more than 10 pounds or for any commercial purpose is a class A misdemeanor punishable by a fine up to \$2,500, imprisonment up to 11 months and 29 days, or both. If third conviction in any amount exceeding 10 pounds or upon the second conviction in any amount exceeding 1,000 pounds or in any amount for any commercial purpose, class E felony. Imprisonment between one year and six years, and possible fine up to \$3,000. The court must also require community service litter removal for up to 160 hours. (see §40-35-111)
Virginia	Va. Code §33.1-346	Misdemeanor. Punishable by a fine between \$250 and \$2,500, imprisonment up to 12 months, or both. In lieu of jail, the court may order community service in litter abatement activities.
West Virginia	W. Va. Code §22-15A-4	Misdemeanor. For amounts not exceeding 100 pounds or 27 cubic feet: fine between \$100 and \$1,000, community service for eight to 16 hours, or both. For amounts greater than 100 pounds or 27 cubic feet, but less than 500 pounds or 216 cubic feet: fine between \$1,000 and \$2,000, community service for 16 to 32 hours, or both. For amounts greater than 500 pounds or 216 cubic feet or any amount which had been collected for commercial purposes: fine between \$2,500 and \$25,000, imprisonment for up to one year, or both. For subsequent violations: double the authorized range of fines and community service.

Table 9.1: Adapted from Jennifer Schultz and Mindy Bridges, “States with Littering Penalties,” National Conference of State Legislatures, March 20, 2014. Accessed at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/states-with-littering-penalties.aspx>.



f9.11 Visitor satisfaction with Appalachian scenery



Viewshed Conservation

Visitors to Appalachia expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Region's scenery, with 82% of visitors being "very satisfied" with the scenery on their trip. Stakeholders expressed similar enthusiasm for visual resources, with more than three-fourths of respondents rating local scenery as "excellent."

Given the significance of local scenery, it is surprising that many communities have few, if any, policies protecting important viewsheds or visual amenities. While zoning and other land use regulations are fairly common in urban areas and larger towns, planning and codes enforcement are sometimes lacking in smaller or more rural areas. Many times, these same areas boast some of the most desirable scenic views.

Communities can take a few simple steps to help protect important scenic resources. The first step is to identify important areas by conducting a viewshed survey. Viewshed surveys help prioritize important scenic routes in a designated area using visual assessments and mapping tools. Communities can then use the results of these inventories to mitigate visual impacts from signage, cell towers, and other potential eyesores.⁸⁴

Once identified, important viewsheds can be protected using a number of tools and approaches. These include the following:

- Educational and voluntary programs to inform residents of important scenic resources and promote cooperation among property owners. Engaging residents in landscape surveys and recognizing property owners can help with these efforts.
- Incentives such as beautification grants or tax benefits for viewshed easements.

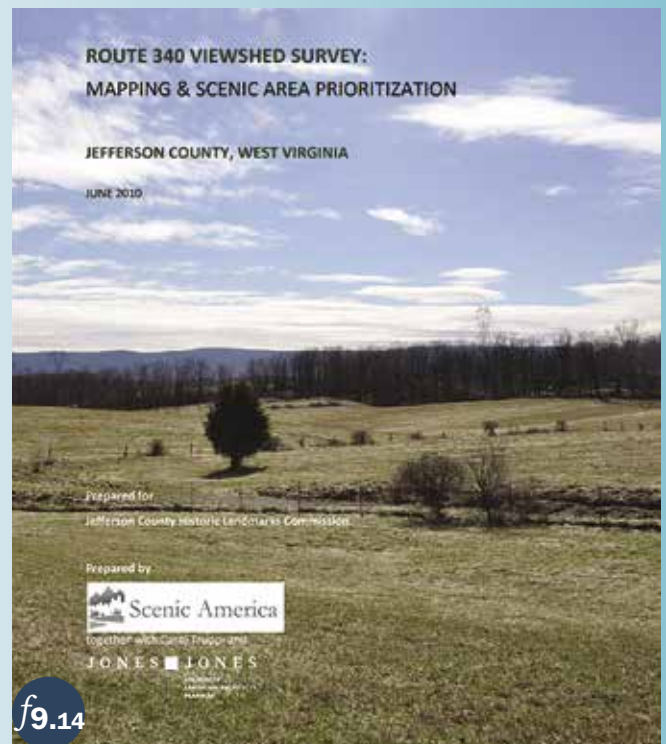
⁸⁴ Scenic America, "Strategies for Protecting Scenic Views and Vistas," <http://www.scenic.org/issues/scenic-easements-a-view-protection/strategies-for-protecting-scenic-views-and-vistas>; Jefferson County Landmarks Commission, *Route 340 Viewshed Survey: Mapping & Scenic Area Prioritization Jefferson County, West Virginia*, June 2010.



Recycling bins and solar compactor on the main street of Boone, North Carolina.



This combined litter and recycling receptacle in Jamestown, New York allows for convenient and efficient recycling.



The Kentucky Trail Town program assists municipalities in creating quality trail visitor experiences.

Communities can use the results of viewshed surveys to mitigate visual impacts from signage, cell towers, and other potential eyesores.

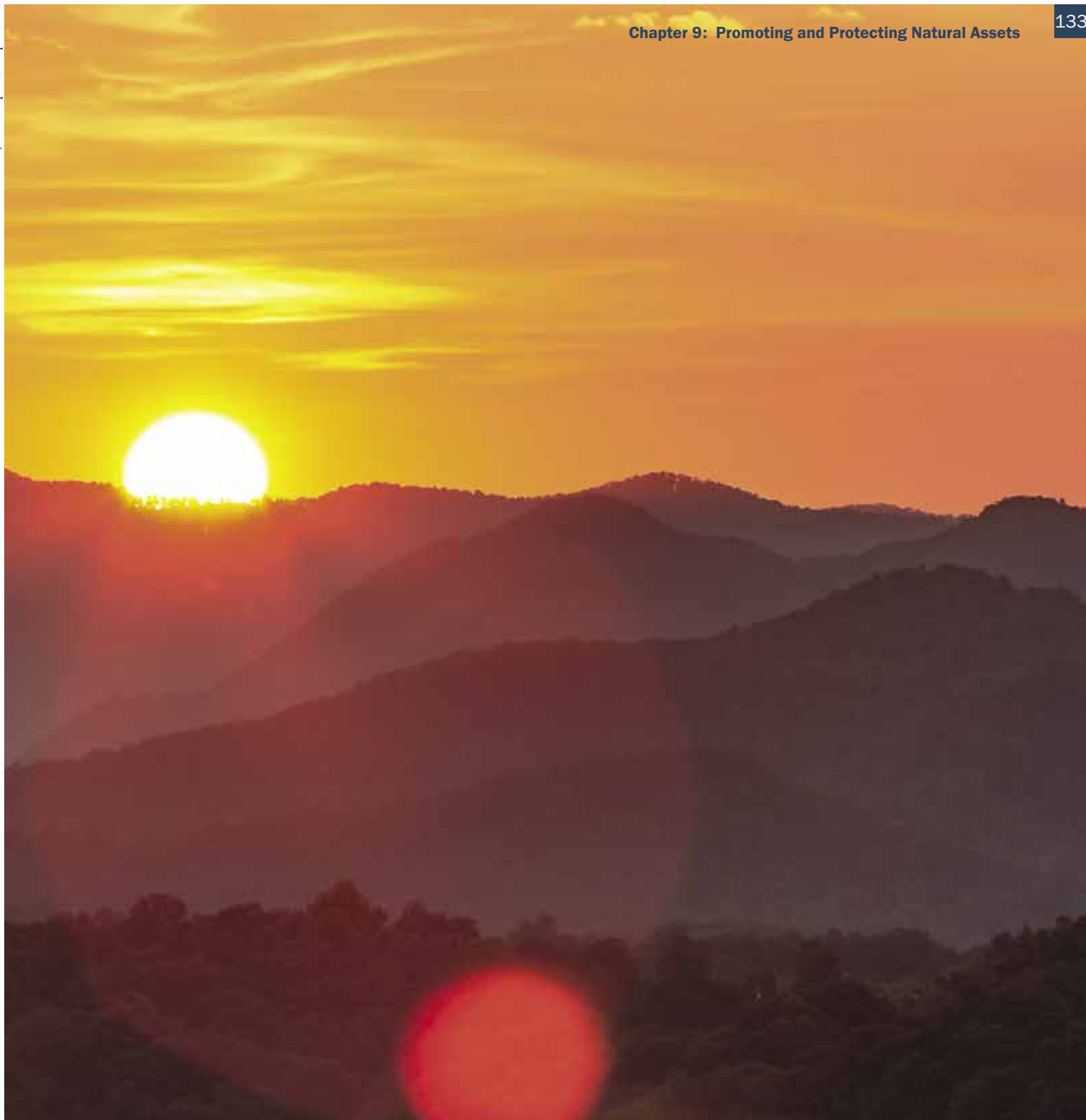
- Land purchases through land trusts or land conservancies. Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs) can also be useful in some areas, especially those near urban centers. TDRs allow developers to transfer development rights from scenic lands to growth areas. Developers can then use these transferred rights to increase density or receive other consideration in growth-area developments.

Analysis

While Appalachia's natural beauty, abundant wildlife, and environmental resources create a plethora of opportunities for tourism growth and development, poorly managed growth can threaten these same resources, deter visitation, and undermine investments in tourism development. The solution lies in good management of local activities, mitigation of

potential adverse impacts, and informed decision-making. Best practices related to Appalachian outdoor-based tourism include the following:

- Public lands are the basis for much of Appalachia's tourism industry. As such, stewardship of these lands should be a priority for regional leaders and stakeholders.
- Reclaimed lands, as well as private timber and mining properties, have the potential for adaptive reuse as recreation areas.
- Trails are a vital component of the Region's tourism landscape. More efforts should be made to connect trails to the services and amenities available in Appalachian communities.
- Trail safety is a vital component of trail management. While trail crime is rare, additional research is needed to help determine and disseminate best practices related to trail security.
- ATV trails are a viable development strategy, especially in Central Appalachia. While these trails can reap significant benefits, they also carry environmental and safety risks. Communities should make informed decisions about these trails and work to mitigate associated risks.
- Appalachia's scenic beauty is among its most important assets. Litter and poor development practices can threaten this important resource. Communities should be proactive in deterring litter and protecting scenic resources.



Appalachia's natural beauty, abundant wildlife, and environmental resources create a plethora of opportunities for tourism growth and development, but when poorly managed, can threaten these same resources, deter visitation, and undermine investments in tourism.

Case Study: Coudersport, Pennsylvania

Cherry Springs State Park

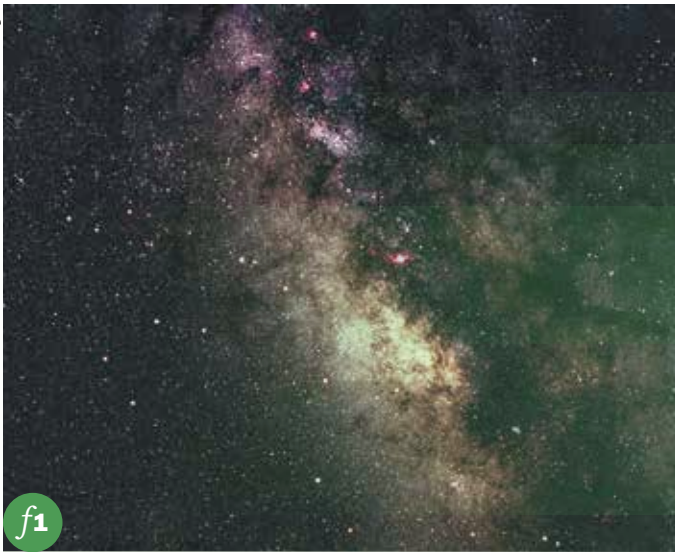
It was odd, the park ranger thought, to see a camper in the small state park in the dead of winter. The park, located in a remote area in North Central Pennsylvania, was primarily a summer destination, best known for its annual “Woodsmen’s Show.”

Few came in the off-season, and fewer still camped out. His curiosity piqued, the ranger approached the campsite. As he got closer, he noticed something else that was unusual—this camper had a telescope.

This chance encounter initiated a series of events that transformed a modest, event-driven park into what is arguably the premier dark sky destination in the eastern United States. In the process, the change also helped uplift a nearby community, Coudersport, and turn it into a hub for astronomical tourism.

Per Aspera Ad Astra (Through Hardship to the Stars)

Carved from lands in the Susquehannock State Forest atop the Alleghany Plateau, Cherry Springs State Park was established in 1922. Most improvements at the small 82-acre park were carried out in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Since 1952, the park has been home to an annual “Woodsmen’s Show,” a celebration of traditional logging skills.



Cherry Springs boasts some of the finest views of night skies in the eastern United States.

Just over 20 years ago, park staff noted the first astronomer at the park, a visitor who had found the park while searching satellite images for dark places. Word soon got out, and lone visitors soon turned into small groups, and then larger groups after that. Today, on a clear night, it is not unusual to find up to a hundred amateur astronomers camped at the park.

These numbers swell, however, during the semi-annual “star parties” at the site. These multi-day observing events attract hundreds of amateur astronomers from across the United States, and even other countries. Attendance at these events has grown so much that park officials now cap participation at 500. In some cases, they have to turn people away.

Park officials have made significant changes to the park to meet this demand. The main observing field boasts campsites with telescope power hubs. The field also includes rentable observing domes and modern heated restrooms. Earth berms, evergreen plantings, specialized lighting, and fencing protects the field from light pollution. A second area, across the road, boasts an outdoor classroom and space for educational programming.

In 2000, Cherry Springs became one of the first parks in the nation to earn recognition from the International Dark Skies Association as a Dark Skies Park. Earning this status not only required lighting changes at the park, it also needed buy-in from local communities. In support of the park, nearby towns also changed their lighting.

The results of these activities are dramatic. In 2016, night sky activities at the park attracted more than 106,000 visitors. Total park attendance was 126,619. A 2010 economic

Coudersport, Pennsylvania



COUNTY FACTS

County	Potter
Population (2017) ¹	16,802
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$28,396
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	7.2%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	14.4%
ARC status (2020) ²	Transitional

CITY FACTS

Founded (Cherry Springs) ³	1922
Miles to Interstate (I-86) ⁴	53
Miles to state capitol (Harrisburg, PA) ⁴	176
Miles to nearest metro area (Buffalo, NY) ⁴	110
Miles to nearest commercial airport (University Park, State College) ⁴	95

SOURCES

¹ “The Appalachian Region.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² “Socioeconomic Data.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ “History of Cherry Springs State Park.” Accessed at <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

impact study estimated park spending at over \$1 million. Given the increasing popularity of dark sky activities in the past decade, this figure has likely increased.⁸⁵

Darkness on the Edge of Town

Coudersport, Pennsylvania, with a population of 2,444, is the nearest town to the park. Unusual for a small, rural community, Coudersport was once the home of a major telecom firm, Adelphia. The company, built by a local resident, was once the fifth largest cable TV provider in the United States. Its sudden collapse in 2002 rocked the small community and devastated its economy. Hundreds of jobs were cut, including many in and around Coudersport.⁸⁶

Reeling from the loss of its largest employer, the community turned to tourism to help sustain its economy. Visitors to Cherry Springs helped sustain and then revive the small struggling downtown. Today, Coudersport boasts a small boutique hotel, a coffee shop, and multiple retail stores and restaurants.

The park has also created unique opportunities for entrepreneurship. For example, the community now offers dark skies tours and night-sky guide services. Baked goods and local crafts have dark skies themes. Straub Brewery even offers a dark skies beer.

Challenges Ahead

For park officials, the biggest challenge may be meeting demand. The small park is currently at capacity for many events—if not beyond capacity. Expanding the site would be difficult, given the limited space, historic resources, and necessary lighting protections.

Park officials are also facing increased competition. Cherry Springs' success has helped inspire a host of competitors in states and communities across the Region. While none can currently match the Pennsylvania site in terms of facilities or reputation, it is becoming clear that the dark sky enthusiasts are enjoying more options.

⁸⁵ Cherry Springs State Park, "2016 Cherry Springs Dark Sky Park Report."; Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, "The Economic Significance and Impact of Pennsylvania State Parks: An Updated Assessment of 2010 Park Visitor Spending on the State and Local Economy," February 2012, http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_007019.pdf.

⁸⁶ Patricia Sabatini, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 15, 2002, <http://old.post-gazette.com/businessnews/20020515adelphia0515p2.asp>



Rentable observatory domes are available at Cherry Springs Park.



Adelphia's former headquarters, known locally as the "Taj Mahal," is a reminder of the recent and prosperous past.



Dark sky tourism has helped revive downtown Coudersport.



Dark-sky-themed goods, ranging from crafts to food products, are popular in local shops.



Funding is a perennial issue for the park, as competition for state funds is becoming more intense. The small remote park, while distinct, is often a lower priority when compared to busy facilities near the state's urban centers. Fortunately, the park has a robust nonprofit support group, the Dark Sky Fund. This group raises funds for park improvements through donation boxes within the site.

Lessons Learned

Cherry Springs and Coudersport offer several lessons for communities looking to tourism for help after a sudden economic change. These include the following:

- We live in an age where “big data” seems to rule, but small observations sometimes make the difference. Case in point: the park ranger who noticed the out-of-season camper with a telescope.
- Cherry Springs demonstrates the importance of asset-based development. In their particular case, recognizing the asset—darkness—involved vision, research, and creativity.
- Conservation of an environmental asset (darkness) and cooperation with local communities were essential to Cherry Springs' success.
- Coudersport was quick to adapt the park's dark sky theme and develop its tourism around it. Their embrace of dark sky tourism has helped launch several small businesses and related local products.



f6

The Dark Sky Fund is a nonprofit fundraising group for the park.

10 Promoting Appalachia's Cultural Heritage

In 1961, the newly incorporated city of Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, got its first major theme park: The Rebel Railroad. Built to capitalize on the centennial of the Civil War, the park offered young visitors to the adjacent Smoky Mountains an exciting adventure. Children in kepi hats would board a train festooned with Confederate flags and help protect it from Yankee attack. Later, these same kids would celebrate their victory in “Rebeltown,” where they could relax at the local saloon and converse with soldiers draped in rebel gray.

A few years later, when interest in the Civil War waned, the attraction was rebranded as Goldrush Junction. The train boasted a Wild West theme and young riders were “deputized” to protect the train from an Indian attack, while also being encouraged to purchase cap pistols so that they

could shoot at feather-clad Native Americans during their brief ride.

A half-century later, it is difficult to imagine these attractions. Today the train and tracks of the Rebel Railroad and Goldrush Junction comprise the historical roots of a very different and more positive attraction: Dollywood, one of Appalachia's largest and best-known destinations. Dollywood's growth and success can, in many ways, be attributed to its theme—a celebration of Appalachia's history, arts, and culture.

This transformation is indicative of a prevailing trend in tourism—authenticity. While travelers in the past often wanted to experience a contrived past as portrayed on television or movies, modern tourists are more interested in exploring the authentic history and culture of a destination. This exploration takes place in many ways, and through many different activities. In some cases, as in Dollywood, it may be staged. In other cases, it may include active participation in an artistic or cultural activity.⁸⁷

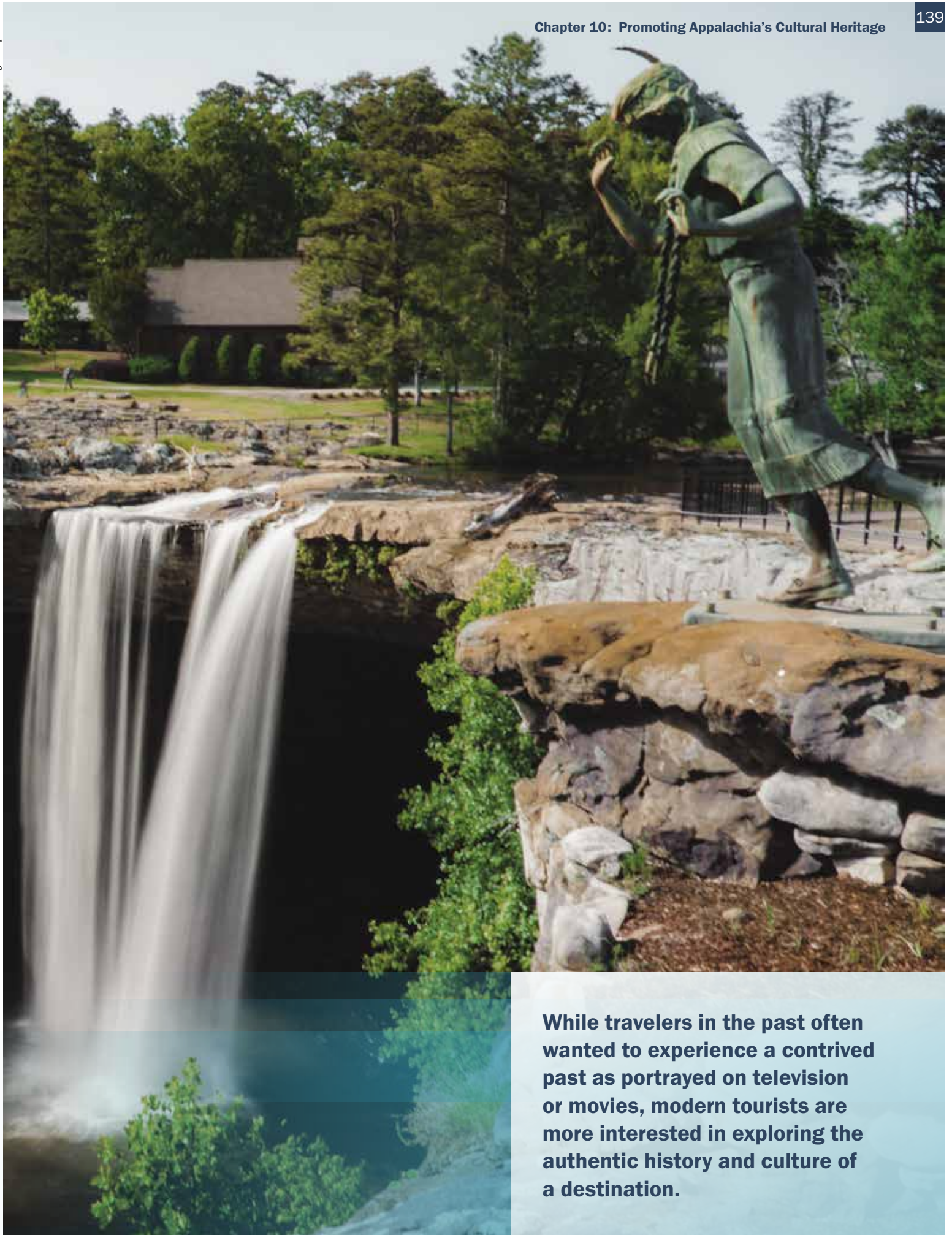
Appalachia's heritage, arts, and culture are as rich and diverse as the Region's landscape. It ranges from blues to bluegrass to the moonshine of East Tennessee to the moon explorers at Huntsville's Space & Rocket Center. It includes not only hundreds of years of history, but also a full range of visual, literary, and performing arts. The scope of these assets is so vast it cannot be detailed in a single chapter.



f10.1

Visitors to the Rebel Railroad examined the park's locomotive. Source: University of Tennessee Libraries Special Collections.

⁸⁷ Muhammad Arfin Bin Salim, Noor Aireen Binti Ibrahim Hanita Hassan, “Language for Tourism: A Review of Literature,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 66, 7 December 2012, Pages 136-143.



While travelers in the past often wanted to experience a contrived past as portrayed on television or movies, modern tourists are more interested in exploring the authentic history and culture of a destination.

Instead, this chapter will examine trends and best practices related to arts and heritage tourism in the Region.

Heritage Tourism: Same Past, More Stories, New Concerns

While outdoor recreation is the most popular activity among visitors to Appalachia, interest in local historic and cultural sites remains high. Over 64% of respondents to the visitor survey reported having visited heritage sites, often in conjunction with outdoor activities. Visitors stated that they “enjoy learning new things about the Region,” including “local history” and “Appalachian culture.”

Appalachia’s history includes many significant people, eras, and events. These include Native American stories, frontier settlements, the Civil War, industrialization, and Civil Rights struggles. In the past half-century, changes to our collective understanding of the past have transformed the interpretation of many historic sites. History has become more inclusive, and the experiences and contributions of marginalized groups are now recognized.

Many Appalachian communities have made considerable strides in expanding their historical narratives. For example, leaders in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, worked with Native American stakeholders when creating the murals for their river landing park. Representatives from the Shawnee Tribe worked with artists and historians to create accurate depictions of tribal village life and events surrounding Lord Dunmore’s War.

Other communities are making similar efforts. In 2006, Clinton, Tennessee, opened the Green McAdoo Cultural Center, a museum dedicated to the former school’s role in the 1950s desegregation crisis. The New River Gorge National River has developed an African American Heritage Auto Tour and features exhibits about Black miners in its visitor centers.⁸⁸

Despite this progress, some issues remain. Growing controversies related to Confederate monuments and the nature of civic memory are impacting a small number of communities in the Region. An even larger number of communities are grappling with symbols from that era, ranging from Confederate imagery in a visitor center to issues with vendors at local events.⁸⁹ While such imagery has historical



Officials in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, worked with experts and tribal stakeholders to accurately portray Native American village life in this flood wall mural.



While inauthentic Appalachian stereotypes are becoming less common, they can still be found in some areas of the Region. Source: <https://edgewater-hotel.com/blog/unique-shops-in-gatlinburg-tn/>



Jonathon Romeo / The Crooked Road

Crooked Road wayside exhibits have excellent branding, a uniform look, and provide excellent content. They lack, however, information about local venues and would benefit from the use of modern technologies.



Red Bay’s First Methodist Church is one of 32 historic houses of worship featured in the North Alabama Hallelujah Trail. Photo Courtesy North Alabama Mountain Lakes Travel Association. <https://www.northalabama.org/trails/hallelujah/>

⁸⁸ Green McAdoo Cultural Center, <http://www.greenmcadoo.org>; National Park Service, “African American Heritage Auto Tour,” <https://www.nps.gov/neri/playourvisit/african-american-heritage-auto-tour.htm>.

merit, it is sometimes displayed without interpretation. As such, it may be divisive and alienating to many visitors.

Communities dealing with sensitive historical issues should follow the example of Point Pleasant and work with stakeholder groups and recognized experts, such as trained public historians, to help navigate and interpret the past. Skillful interpretation can transform divisive sites into learning opportunities. In an effort to assist communities with this process, the Atlanta History Center has created an online guide and template for creating interpretive media and signage. Communities should utilize this resource and consult with their state historical commission, as well as local colleges and universities, for additional guidance.⁹⁰

Creating an Authentic Historical or Cultural Identity

Many of the communities visited during the undertaking of this report have developed a strong cultural identity. This identity not only helps define the community, it becomes a central theme for local branding and programming. These identities vary from the conventionally historic (Marietta's role in trans-Appalachian settlement) to the creative (Jamestown's association with comedy culture), and even the eccentric (Point Pleasant's Mothman lore). While these themes vary dramatically, they provide a vital foundation for their communities' tourism and marketing efforts. They also demonstrate important lessons about identity development in tourism planning.

Foremost among these is authenticity. As one tourism scholar has noted, "the days have well and truly passed where low-quality experiences can satisfy the gullible tourist."⁹¹ Today's visitors demand and expect quality destinations that convey historical and cultural authenticity. "Authenticity" itself can be defined in many ways, but it's rooted in the true interpretation of a historical fact or tangible cultural asset. Of course, the nature of these historical figures and events can be debated. While one may be able to argue that the Mothman does not exist, the legend of the Mothman is well-documented and, as such, is authentic.

⁸⁹ Morgan Gstalter). "Alabama judge overturns law that prevents removal of Confederate monuments," *The Hill*, January 15, 2019; Greg Kocher, "No Spoonbread Festival in Berea After Dispute over Confederate Flag," *Lexington Herald Leader*, March 31, 2016.

⁹⁰ Atlanta History Center, "Confederate Monument Interpretation Guide," <https://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/research/confederate-monuments>.

⁹¹ Craig Wiles and Gail Vander Stoep, "Consideration of Authenticity in Heritage Tourism Planning and Development," *Proceedings of the 2007 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium*, 2007.

While outdoor recreation is the most popular activity among visitors to Appalachia, interest in local historic and cultural sites remains high.

The pursuit of authenticity places demands on local tourism planners and community leaders. These include the following:

- Preservation and conservation of important sites, streetscapes, and landscapes.
- Creation of sign text and other media.
- Coordination of themes around historical and cultural topics at destinations.
- Training of local guides and docents.
- Awareness of diverse and changing values and perceptions.
- Prioritization of authentic experiences and goods.⁹²

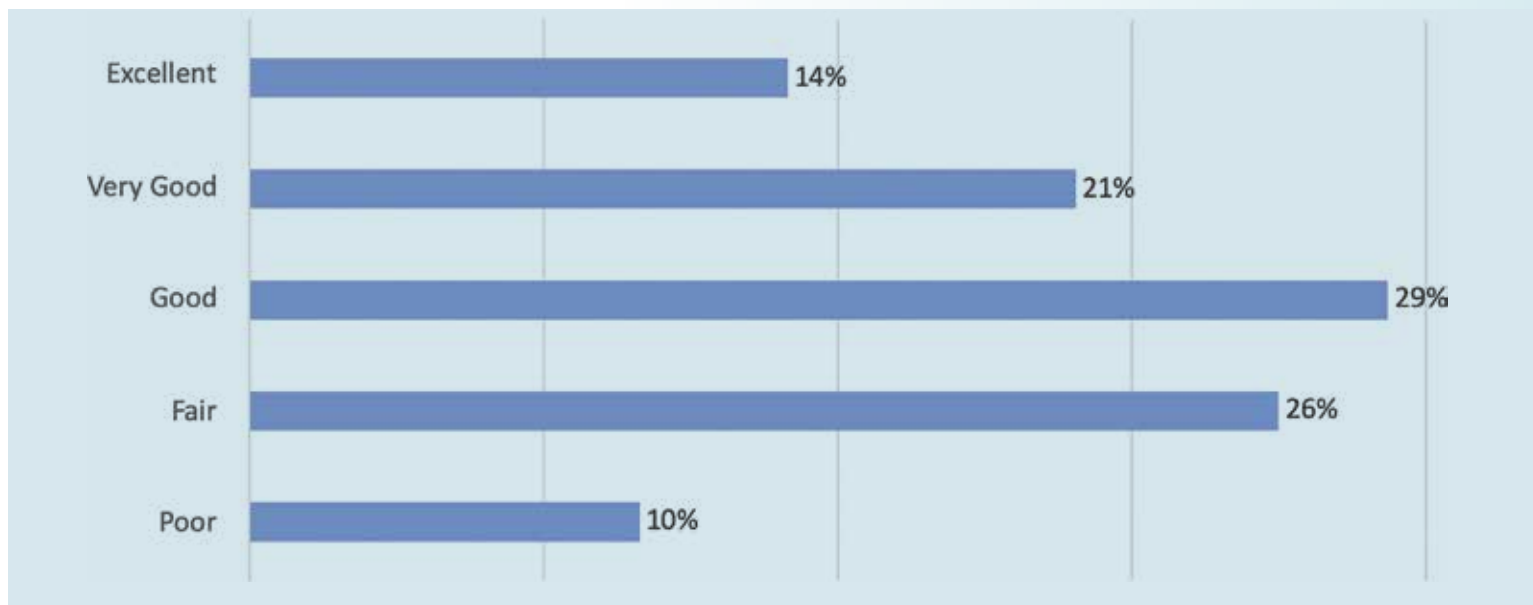
A positive consequence of the move towards authenticity is a reduction of the promotion of Appalachian stereotypes. The "hillbilly" caricature, once ubiquitous across the Region, is becoming less common. Most vendors have instead opted to promote more positive images that stress the natural environment and various attributes related to faith, family, and craftsmanship. Still, some vestiges of old stereotypes remain, and venues and communities should work to discourage these negative portrayals of the Region.

Heritage and Arts Trails

While Appalachia is best known for its hiking and outdoor recreation trails, a new type of trail has become increasingly popular with visitors in recent years. Trails celebrating the

⁹² *Ibid.*

f10.6 Stakeholder ratings of local arts and crafts venues



Region's arts, history, and culture have become a significant part of Appalachia's tourism landscape. These trails, which connect destinations and venues along a defined route or area, usually follow a particular theme. Notable themes in the Region include musical heritage (the Crooked Road Trail), local history (the Blue Ridge Heritage Trail), art (the Appalachian Mural Trail), and food culture (West Virginia Food and Farm Trail).

These trails are usually driving routes along local backroads. Navigation is usually facilitated using brochure maps, roadside signage, and roadside kiosks. Increasingly, however, trails use digital technologies—such as websites, apps, and GPS—to provide context and guidance. As with other cultural heritage attractions, authenticity and branding are key considerations.

Virginia's Crooked Road Trail is an excellent example of an Appalachian heritage trail. Dedicated to the origins of country and bluegrass music, the trail explores sites throughout Southwest Virginia. It covers 19 counties, four cities, and more than 50 small communities. The trail links venues throughout the area, including theaters and other performance centers. It also promotes festivals and events throughout the area.

The trail also includes more than two dozen "wayside exhibits." These roadside kiosks, built to a common design standard, provide information on local sites, as well as interpretations of historical figures and events. These exhibits also feature low-power FM transmitters that play related music or other programming to visitors in nearby cars. The kiosks, however, make no use of digital technologies, such as QR codes or NFC tags, to link to websites, guides, music sales, or additional resources. The kiosks also provide little information about the surrounding communities, other venues, activities, and local businesses.

Despite the kiosks' arguable shortcomings, the trail has generated significant economic benefits. A 2016 assessment, conducted by researchers at Virginia Tech, found that the trail had a direct economic impact of \$6.34 million, and a total impact of more than \$9.2 million. The report estimates that the trail has created a total of 131 new jobs, generating over \$2.8 million in labor income. Communities and businesses along the trail reported not only additional revenues, but also increased pride in their local communities' cultural heritage.⁹³

⁹³ Sarah Lyon-Hill and Patrick Burke, "An Economic Analysis of the Crooked Road: Virginia's Musical Heritage Trail," Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development, March 2016.

f10.7 Stakeholder ratings of local entertainment venues



Among the most extensive trail systems in the Region is the network of driving tours created by the North Alabama Mountain Lakes Travel Association. To date, this organization has created nine distinct trails addressing themes ranging from natural amenities (Magical Waterfalls of North Alabama Trail) to outdoor recreation (the Alabama Bass Trail) and food culture (the North Alabama Barbecue Trail).

The organization's heritage trails highlight two distinct topics: churches and train stations. The North Alabama Hallelujah Trail connects more than 30 houses of worship across 16 counties. The organization's newest trail takes a similar approach to historic train depots, linking three dozen stations in a tour that spans the northern third of the state. Both tours are promoted using detailed websites with interactive maps.⁹⁴

Arts Hubs and Centers

Appalachia boasts a rich arts and crafts tradition. The Region's visual arts, performance arts, and craftsmanship have long been recognized and celebrated. Not surprisingly, the arts represent a major tourism draw. Half of visitors surveyed reported enjoying local music during their travels, and 55% enjoyed other arts and crafts throughout the Region.

The arts generate a significant amount of economic activity. In many cases, a successful artist is a successful entrepreneur, and a thriving band is a thriving small business. Both rely heavily on ancillary enterprises, such as clubs, theaters, galleries, and suppliers, and even delivery and catering services. Together they generate jobs, growth, and revenue in Appalachian communities.

Despite the importance and potential of this tourism sector, some communities lack the facilities needed to fully promote their local arts. While 64% of stakeholders considered their

Half of visitors surveyed reported enjoying local music during their travels, and 55% enjoyed other arts and crafts throughout the Region.

⁹⁴ <https://www.northalabama.org>



local arts and crafts venues as “good” or better, that also means that a third rated them as “fair” or “poor.”

Entertainment venues fared even worse, with almost two-thirds of stakeholders considering them either “fair” or “poor.” Only 3% of stakeholders rated their venues as “excellent.”

Despite these ratings, there are several notable examples of arts and culture tourism across the Appalachian Region. While Berea is noted as a case study, it is just one example of a regional arts hub. These hubs, found throughout the region, serve as clearinghouses and retail outlets for Appalachian artisans and craftspeople. They include themed communities, like Berea; arts districts, such as Chattanooga’s Bluff View District; arts schools, such as Gatlinburg’s Arrowmont School; and state-run artisan centers, such as West Virginia’s Tamarack.

Greensboro, a small community in southwestern Pennsylvania, is an example of a small community transforming into a viable arts hub. The small community, with a population of just 249, has transformed its modest business district by converting three vacant storefronts into a local artists’ cooperative. Members pay a \$200 lifetime

membership fee (or the equivalent in labor) and, in return, are given space to show and sell their work. Profits are divided evenly between the artists and the co-op. To help attract visitors, the co-op building also has a performance space and displays antiques.⁹⁵

While small community co-ops like Greensboro’s provide low-cost opportunities for artists’ sales, large state-run centers offer unmatched visibility and retail traffic. Appalachia is fortunate to have at least three major artisan centers: The Kentucky Artisan Center in Berea; Heartwood in Abingdon, Virginia; and Tamarack: The Best of West Virginia in Beckley.

While these centers serve different areas, they share several important characteristics. All three centers are conveniently located adjacent to major interstates and are visible from the highways. The three centers also feature dining venues featuring local and regional foods. Additionally, the centers double as visitor centers and rest areas, helping them draw potential customers and visitors.

⁹⁵ Caitlin Tan, “Reviving Small, Appalachian Towns with Local Assets,” West Virginia Public Radio, May 23, 2019, <https://www.wvpublic.org/post/reviving-small-appalachian-towns-local-assets#stream/0>.

Tamarack: The Best of West Virginia is the oldest of the three centers and has served as the model for other large state-run venues. Built in the mid-1990s, the center was initially described as a “bold experiment,” one that was funded by revenues from turnpike concessions. In its first four years of operations, the center logged more than two million visitors and more than \$20 million in sales. It is also credited with helping boost tourism not just in the Beckley area, but across West Virginia in general.⁹⁶

To ensure quality, all goods sold at Tamarack must pass a thorough review process. All products—including artwork, media, food, and bath products—must be made in West Virginia and approved by center reviewers. Arts and craft projects undergo an evaluation process, in which they are critiqued and evaluated by master artisans. Artisans, once approved by a jury, not only receive retail space for their goods, but they become eligible for training and educational programs, as well as receive marketing assistance. In turn, these services help West Virginia artists succeed as entrepreneurs.⁹⁷

The Etsy Effect

While Appalachian arts hubs have enjoyed success in promoting tourism, their existence is increasingly threatened by a recent and potentially disruptive online marketplace—Etsy. Founded in 2005, Etsy describes itself as “the global marketplace for unique and creative goods.” The online service boasts more than 1.9 million sellers, many of whom are artists and craftspeople. A search for the word “Appalachian” on Etsy returned almost 6,500 products, and another for “Appalachia” returned more than 1,100 items. Items for sale included a “pepperoni rolls poster” (\$15.00), a “No Hate in My Holler” hoodie (\$41.00), a flowered quilt (\$150), and an original oil landscape painting (\$10,500).⁹⁸

For artists, selling on Etsy offers many advantages. The site has a global audience with millions of potential customers. It provides easy sales, shipping tools, and additional services for the artist. It may even offer reduced costs to the seller. While arts hubs, galleries, and centers can sometimes charge a hefty commission on sales (up to 50%, in some cases), a listing on



Greensboro's Art Co-op is helping transform the small river town into a local arts hub. Photo courtesy Caitlin Tan.



West Virginia's Tamarack is an impressive retail space for the state's arts and craft products.



The Barter Theater is one of Appalachia's most respected and well-established performance venues. It has adapted to the digital age through active social media use, electronic ticketing, and other online services. Photo Courtesy Southern Foodways Alliance. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/southernfoodwaysalliance/3724131832>

Fred Sauceman / The Southern Foodways Alliance

⁹⁶ John Lilly, “Tamarack,” *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006, 1510-1511; “History,” Tamarack Website, <https://www.tamarackwv.com/about-us/history/>.

⁹⁷ “Jury Process,” Tamarack website, <https://www.tamarackwv.com/about-us/jury-process/>.

⁹⁸ Search conducted on www.etsy.com, August 26, 2019.

Appalachia is well-positioned to attract visitors by offering them authentic experiences and destinations tied to the Region's rich cultural and artistic heritage.

Etsy costs just 20 cents. Sales on Etsy incur a 5% transaction fee, and while sellers are responsible for shipping and shipping labels, the overall costs are a fraction of those found in traditional retail environments.⁹⁹

Not surprisingly, artists and craftspeople are increasingly turning to Etsy as their main sales partner, much to the detriment of traditional venues. Local officials and retailers report a decline in artist participation, and local craft fairs and arts events now sometimes face difficulty attracting vendors. Many expressed concerns over the future of arts venues and the long-term viability of arts-based tourism.

To compete or coexist with Etsy, traditional retail venues will have to emphasize the advantages of place-based sales. Among these is the ability to promote and guarantee authenticity. Assurances that products have gone through a thorough review process, meet-the-artists events, and tie-ins to local food and music give in-person retailers an advantage that online sellers cannot match. Other examples include classes with master artisans, curated shows and events, and participation in regional arts trails.

The Performing Arts: Reconciling Tradition with Innovation

The performing arts in Appalachia are at a crossroads. The Region has a rich and celebrated tradition in the performing arts, especially in music. These arts are celebrated at well-established venues across the Region, some of which have become famous in their own right. At the same time, performing artists—like their visual and craft counterparts—are experiencing a changing

marketplace. New technologies and changing preferences are challenging traditional venues, while at the same time inspiring new and innovative opportunities.

Established venues—such as the Barter Theater in Virginia, the Renfro Valley Barn Dance in Kentucky, and the Mountainside Theatre in North Carolina—have adapted to the changing nature of the marketplace. All three venues have embraced social media, using Facebook and Twitter to promote performances and other events. They also partner with local hotels and other attractions to create easy and attractive visitor packages. Additionally, the venues have expanded offerings to include greater diversity in acts and performers. For example, the marquee event at the Mountainside Theatre, *Unto These Hills*, was recently rewritten to better portray the Cherokee experience and include more Native American cast members.¹⁰⁰

While established performance venues have generally adapted to the digital age, emerging venues are still striving to create unique and authentic performance experiences. This trend, which builds again on the quest for authenticity, brings the performing arts to nontraditional spaces. Appalachian examples of this trend include the following:

- Sloss Furnaces in Birmingham, Alabama: A massive iron furnace complex, now a historic site, that hosts major outdoor concerts and is home to Slossfest, an annual summer music and arts festival.¹⁰¹
- The Caverns in Pelham, Tennessee: A subterranean amphitheater that hosts concerts throughout the year, it is home to the PBS series *Bluegrass Underground*, and is promoted as “the greatest show under earth.”
- Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary in Petros, Tennessee: A former prison, now a historic site, that hosts an annual concert series.

Events at these sites provide visitors with unique experiences in novel environments. They also provide significant revenue streams to natural or historical

⁹⁹ Etsy.com, “What are the Fees and Taxes for Selling on Etsy,” <https://help.etsy.com/hc/en-us/articles/115014483627-What-are-the-Fees-and-Taxes-for-Selling-on-Etsy-?segment=selling>.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.bartertheatre.com>; <https://www.renfrovalley.com>; Tony Kiss, “Head to these hills: Cherokee outdoor drama still stuns after more than 50 years,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, July 9, 2010.

¹⁰¹ <https://slossfest.com>; The Caverns, “About Us,” <https://thecaverns.com/about>; Brushy Mountain Group, “Events at Brushy,” <https://tourbrushy.com/events-at-brushy>.



destinations, and they help increase the awareness and appreciation of these sites. Perhaps most importantly, they attract significant numbers of visitors to rural areas and small communities. A concert at the Caverns, for example, hosts up to 1,000 visitors—more than double the population of Pelham. The venue brings over 25,000 visitors to Grundy County each year.¹⁰²

Analysis

Appalachia is well-positioned to attract visitors by offering them authentic experiences and destinations tied to the Region's rich cultural and artistic heritage. In order to succeed, however, communities and destinations must adapt to changing markets and customer demands. They must also develop strategies that will allow them to survive alongside disruptive trends and technologies. As such, communities that are developing or already engaging in arts and heritage tourism should consider the following:

- Authenticity is paramount in developing this type of tourism. Experiences, sites, and goods should reflect the history, arts, and culture of the community or region. Give visitors what they cannot get elsewhere.
- Respect the diversity of today's traveling public. Avoid divisive imagery or potentially offensive language or sights. Provide ample interpretation to convey stories associated with historical figures and events.
- Avoid stereotypes, including those often applied to Appalachian residents. Create positive narratives that stress Appalachia's ingenuity, creativity, and resilience.
- Themed driving trails are a great way to connect sites across multiple communities into a rewarding visitor experience. Trail developers should recognize the technological expectations of today's travelers and incorporate smartphone applications into destination activities.
- Arts hubs can serve as regional or even statewide retail outlets for arts, crafts, and other local products. In order to remain competitive with online services, they should also provide experiences—and a level of service the internet cannot match.
- Unique local performance spaces are a growing trend in the Region and can help attract visitors to small and remote areas. To succeed, however, they must provide quality experiences in authentic settings.

¹⁰² John Thanki, "First Look: Bluegrass Underground's new home The Caverns," *Tennessean*, March 23, 2018.

Case Study: Berea, Kentucky

Founded in 1855, the community of Berea, Kentucky, long known as a hub of the American crafts movement, has built a thriving tourism industry. Artist studios, the Kentucky Artisan Center, and various crafts festivals alone draw up to 30,000 tourists and 300 tourism buses every year to Berea.¹⁰³

However, even with all that success, there is much room for improvement, as the community looks to maintain growth and expand opportunities for artists—and the broader community—in the age of Etsy.

¹⁰³ Interview with Berea tourism official, 2/27/2019.



Handcrafted dulcimers at Warren A. May Dulcimers in downtown Berea.

A History of Inclusiveness

During the antebellum period, a prominent local landowner, Cassius Clay, sought to organize the area then known as “The Glade” into a community that supported abolitionist causes. He sold tracts of land to prominent non-slaveholders at a nominal cost, and he encouraged abolitionist missionaries to come to the area.¹⁰⁴

In 1853, Clay offered his friend Reverend John G. Fee, of Lewis County, Kentucky, a free tract of land to move to the Glade. Fee accepted ten acres and later established a church, school, and small village. Fee called the fledgling community “Berea” after the Biblical town where the people “received the Word with all readiness of mind.” In 1855, a one-room school, which also served as a church on Sundays, was built. Berea’s first teachers were recruited from Oberlin College, an anti-slavery stronghold in Ohio. Of his modest school, Fee wrote in a letter, “we...eventually look to a college—giving an education to all colors, classes, cheap and thorough.”¹⁰⁵ However, the activism of Fee was not always welcome; he and 94 of his colleagues were driven out of the state by Madison County slaveholders in 1859-60.¹⁰⁶

Their exile would be brief, and the community that Clay and Fee envisioned for Berea would ultimately create a haven

Berea, Kentucky

“It feels like the tourism industry is discounted or written off as less than professional because tourism is viewed as fun.”
– Local Stakeholder



COUNTY FACTS

County	Madison
Population (2017) ¹	91,226
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$34,342
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	4.3%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	19.5%
ARC status (2020) ²	Transitional

CITY FACTS

Founded (Berea) ³	1854
Miles to interstate (I-75) ⁴	0 (Within city limits)
Miles to state capitol (Frankfort, KY) ⁴	65
Miles to nearest metro area (Lexington, KY) ⁴	33
Miles to nearest commercial airport (Blue Grass Airport, Lexington) ⁴	46

SOURCES

¹ “The Appalachian Region.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² “Socioeconomic Data.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ “History of Berea.” Accessed at <https://www.visitberea.com/history/history-of-berea-ky>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

¹⁰⁴ John Thanki, “First Look: Bluegrass Underground’s new home The Caverns,” *Tennessean*, March 23, 2018.

¹⁰⁵ “Berea College Early History.” Accessed at <https://www.berea.edu/about/history/>

¹⁰⁶ “History of Berea.” Accessed at <https://www.visitberea.com/history/history-of-berea-ky>

for those who wanted to learn. In 1866, the Berea Literary Institute was opened as an interracial school with enrollment of 187: 96 Black students and 91 white students. For decades, this balance remained steady. The institute is now called Berea College.

An Interwoven Tradition of Education and Crafts

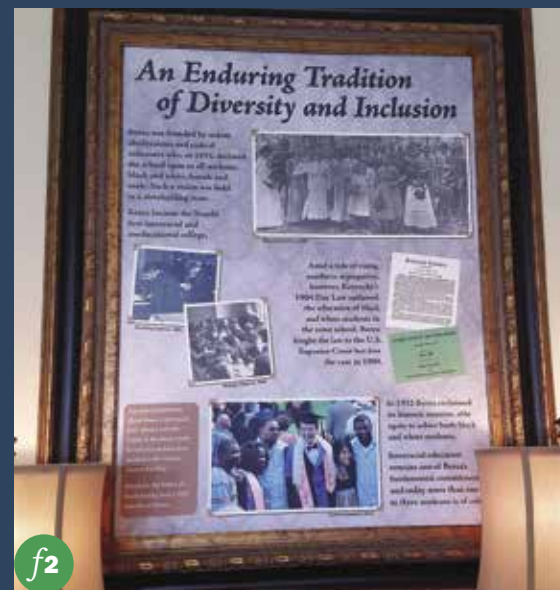
In addition to a progressive stance on education, Berea College had an important role in the crafts revival. Founders of the college firmly believed that a lack of finances should not be a hindrance for anyone who wanted to learn (as a federally recognized work college, it remains “tuition free,” with students participating in unique, local work programs for the college and town). On graduation days, families of graduates would traditionally bring goods and crafts to the college “in exchange” for tuition; these items, such as furniture and coverlets, represented significant time commitments and displays of skill. On fundraising trips to the North, Berea College President William Frost took Appalachian overshot coverlets with him to show the beauty and craftsmanship, while also discussing the mission of the college. Frost quickly realized that there was a national market for traditional crafts, and he established the Berea College Fireside Industries to sell crafts made locally. This quickly became a focus of the institution: Berea built a loom house, hired a supervisor to ensure quality, and then established the Student Craft Industries. He also encouraged artisans to move to Berea to market their crafts and pass their skills on to others.¹⁰⁷ This helped to cement Berea’s position in the American Crafts Revival in the twentieth century.

Thriving Crafts Tourism at a Crossroads

Today, Berea is recognized as a hub for both quality education and quality crafts. The Kentucky Legislature has designated Berea as the “Folk Arts and Crafts Capitol of Kentucky.” Berea has three arts districts:

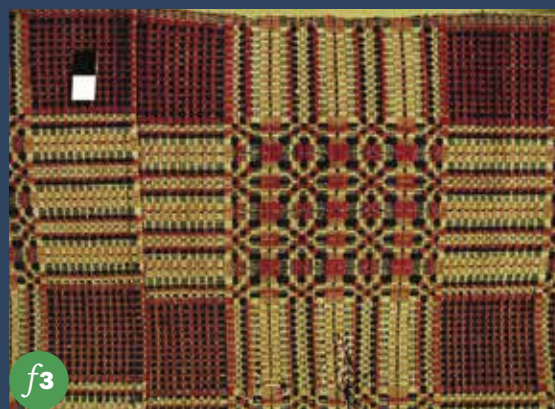
- The Old Town Artisan Village, with studios for working artists.
- The Square, for general shopping and dining.
- The Kentucky Artisan Center, located off I-75.

The arts districts are a considerable tourism draw; the Artisan Village draws up to 30,000 tourists per year, while the Kentucky



f2

The history of Berea’s diversity on display in the Boone Tavern.



f3

Lover’s Knot Coverlet, pre-1909. Source: <https://libraryguides.berea.edu/LJACcoverlets>



f4

Bike repair station in front of the Berea Welcome Center.

¹⁰⁷ “Berea, Kentucky, A History.” Brochure by Berea Tourism.

Artisan Center has up to 300,000 visitors annually. Tourism is supported by a robust social media marketing effort, reaching more than 90,000 each year through Facebook ads.¹⁰⁸ In addition, Berea hosts several popular festivals. The annual Festival of Workshops brings in 70-80 artists to offer classes, workshops, and experiences for a dizzying array of arts and crafts. Opportunities are available for those who have a few hours for a class, as well as those with multiple days to spare.

Despite the decades of success, Berea is seeing shifts in both the artist community and the local community, with leaders working to address them. Locally, the tourism commission is constantly working to educate the broader community on why tourism is important. They offer annual hospitality training to help maintain a high level of service in the traditionally high-turnover hotel and restaurant sectors.

The local issues are consistent for every community with tourism draws; however, the growing issues with arts and crafts tourism are more complex. Like many industries, the advent of electronic commerce is changing how artists market their creations. Artists no longer need galleries and storefronts to sell goods, as Etsy, Amazon shops, and Instagram all allow for quick and easy posting and marketing of products. This poses a challenge for an artist community like Berea, which has a tradition of having public, working artists within the city. As some longtime artists consider retirement, it is growing difficult to find younger artists willing to take over their studios. Many younger artists are risk-averse to take on the entrepreneurial aspects of running a studio or storefront, especially when they can work and sell products out of their own homes.

The Berea Tourism Commission is developing creative opportunities to address these modern challenges to the arts and crafts industry. A recent solution includes an “emerging artist” initiative called the Art Accelerator Program. This program provides 3–5 emerging artists the opportunity to work within the artisan community, networking and learning from seasoned artists in the area over a period of time of up to 16 months. They receive a stipend, gain access to studio space, and work with each other to stock and manage Gallery 123, a retail sales outlet in the Artisan Village. The emerging artists bring their fresh perspectives, energy, and talent to the community, upholding and revitalizing the legacy of Berea’s craft economy.¹⁰⁹

Despite some obstacles, including a changing marketplace in the traditional arts and crafts sector, Berea has developed a thriving and lively community that offers a host of options for visitors. Berea’s history of inclusiveness is still evident; for example, the city is very welcoming to bikers (evidenced by the handy bike repair stations in town), and it has many residents that are part of the WarmShowers network, which pairs local hosts with bikers, hikers, and other travelers. Unsurprisingly, traveler reviews are glowing, sharing tales of hospitality, good food, and myriad reasons “why artsy-craftsy Berea is [the place] to rest and explore in central Kentucky.”¹¹⁰

Lessons Learned

As a mature destination, Berea offers many lessons for other communities in the Region. These include the following:

- Berea has long kept its tourism focus on the community’s history for making high-quality arts and crafts and furniture and is expanding it to new visitors with arts festivals and classes for crafters.
- Events like the annual Festival of Workshops have expanded multi-night destination stays in Berea, enhancing the day-trip and overnight tourism in the town.
- The city is thoughtfully expanding their community infrastructure to market the city as a bike-friendly destination and jumping-off point for other regional getaways in Kentucky.
- When local officials recognized the potential negative impact of online marketing and internet sales of arts and crafts for their destination art community, they devised the creative Art Accelerator Program to nurture new artists within the community.
- Berea also has a unique abolitionist and anti-segregationist history with the potential to attract visitors.
- Berea’s efforts to reduce litter and provide convenient recycling containers on the street further enhance the charm and beauty of the historic downtown.

¹⁰⁹ “The Art Accelerator Program.” Accessed at <https://www.visitberea.com/the-art-accelerator-program>.

¹¹⁰ <http://littlemissbiketour.com/2019/08/17/berea-kentucky-artisan-workshops-a-tuition-free-college-and-fudge/>.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Berea tourism official, 2/27/2019.

Case Study: Iuka, Mississippi, and the Natchez Trace Parkway

The Natchez Trace is one of the oldest roads in North America. The route, which runs from Nashville, Tennessee to Natchez, Mississippi, predates European settlement and was first used by indigenous peoples for trade and hunting. In the early nineteenth century, the well-worn route served as the main conduit for traders and settlers moving between the Upper South and the Mississippi Delta and beyond.

*f1*

**“We’re friendly. We’re
Southern hospitality”
– Local Stakeholder**

The Natchez Trace Parkway is a scenic and historic drive through the heart of the American South.



Iuka's small downtown has the potential to draw in visitors.

During the Great Depression, the Trace became the subject of a major New Deal project. In the late 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps began efforts to transform the route into a 444-mile parkway. With two lanes, it's a historic driving experience that runs through parts of Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi. The Appalachian portion of the road connects Tupelo, Mississippi to Lewis County, Tennessee.

Designed as a leisurely scenic drive, the Trace has limited access, controlled signage, lower speeds, and little development. Roadside picnic areas and interpretive sites are found along the route. A large visitor center is located just outside of Tupelo. Public restrooms and other amenities are available near major sites. No advertising is allowed on the Trace.¹¹¹

Opportunities Found and Lost

The Natchez Trace Parkway attracts about six million visitors per year, making it one of the top ten most visited National Park Service destinations. The Tupelo section of the parkway is among the most popular portions of the Trace, attracting about 200,000 visitors every month. The route attracts a diverse range of drivers, and it appears to be popular among both RV and motorcycle enthusiasts.¹¹²

While these visitation numbers are impressive, the economic impact of the Trace is somewhat limited. The design

Iuka, Mississippi



COUNTY FACTS

County	Tishomingo
Population (2017) ¹	19,542
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$20,925
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	5.6%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	18.6%
ARC status (2020) ²	At-Risk

CITY FACTS

Founded (Iuka) ³	1857
Miles to interstate (I-22) ⁴	45
Miles to state capitol (Jackson, MS) ⁴	205
Miles to nearest metro area (Tupelo, MS) ⁴	30
Miles to nearest commercial airport (Huntsville International Airport) ⁴	88

SOURCES

¹ "The Appalachian Region." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² "Socioeconomic Data." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ "Iuka History." Accessed at <https://iukams.com/iuka-history/>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

¹¹¹ National Park Service, Natchez Trace Parkway, <https://www.nps.gov/natr/index.htm>; National Park Service, "Natchez Trace Parkway: 2011 Business Plan, 2011.

¹¹² National Park Service, Natchez Trace Parkway: Stats—Park Reports, <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/Park/NATR>.

considerations that make the route attractive also inhibit the ability of communities to promote local businesses and attractions. Access to nearby communities is noted with basic signage; however, little information about these areas is available outside of four visitor centers. Just one of these centers, the Tupelo facility, is located along the Appalachian portion of the parkway.

Unfortunately, the site visit team was unable to visit and evaluate this visitor center or many other facilities along the Trace, as their visit took place during a federal government shutdown in January 2019. The local impact of this distant political impasse was quite visible. Closed facilities, piles of litter, and empty parking lots testified to the effects of the closure. Park Service statistics show an almost 7% drop compared to January 2018, a loss of 35,000 recreational visitors.¹¹³

Community Impacts

Iuka is a small community located in Tishomingo County, Mississippi, about 45 miles northwest of Tupelo and 14 miles from the Natchez Trace Parkway (approximately 15 miles of the parkway runs through the county). As such, Iuka and Tishomingo County are, in some respects, representative of the impact of the route on rural tourism.

Tourism and economic development officials are grateful for the parkway and the visitors it brings. Many tourists stop in the town while making an Elvis Presley pilgrimage from Tupelo to Memphis, though officials regret the guidelines that limit opportunities to promote local assets. Signage, both on the parkway and in the community, is seen as a pressing need. However, some in the county resist efforts to promote nearby attractions. “Signage has been discussed for 15 years,” one official noted, adding that there can be some local resentment towards outsiders: “This is my boat ramp, my hunting spot.”

Officials also noted other barriers to tourism growth. More lodging options are needed in the county, including both hotels and Airbnb residences. Some also expressed concerns about the promotion and maintenance of a local state park, which they believe has been worsening in recent years.

A lack of infrastructure in the town also helps explain another local problem: a lack of residents, with three-fourths of local workers living outside of Tishomingo County. Most live in nearby urban centers, such as Tupelo and Alabama’s Quad-Cities. Improved amenities might help attract or retain some of these people.

A Study in Contrasts

Among the case studies included in this report, Iuka, Mississippi and Red Bay, Alabama are the closest in proximity: the two communities lie in adjacent counties less than 30 miles apart. They are similar in size and comparable in many ways. However, while they may be very similar on paper, their experiences have been worlds apart.

Tennessee Valley Authority projects, the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, and NASA and military spending have long fueled the economy of Iuka and Tishomingo County, Mississippi. Spending cuts and the completion of these projects have had a dire impact on local attitudes. “When big federal projects end and go away,” one official lamented, “people lose heart.”

Entrepreneurship is also not prevalent in Iuka. Capital is difficult to access, and small business development assistance remains a top priority for community leaders.

Lessons Learned

The Natchez Trace Parkway and Iuka offer difficult but important lessons for Appalachian communities. These include the following:

- The parkway reveals the tensions that sometimes exist between the desire for aesthetics and the need for development. More research should be conducted on ways technology can help bridge this gap.
- The experience of Tishomingo County demonstrates the importance of tourism amenities and infrastructure for non-tourists. Promoting tourism also helps attract and retain residents.
- The contrast between Red Bay and Iuka is a reminder that local characteristics, even among communities close to one another on a map, can seem worlds apart in terms of development and attitudes.

¹¹³ National Park Service, Natchez Trace Parkway: Stats—Park Reports, <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/Park/NATR>.



The Natchez Trace Parkway reveals the tension that sometimes exists between the desire for aesthetics and the need for development. More research should be conducted on ways technology can help bridge this gap.

11 Building a Culture of Tourism

Many successful tourism destinations throughout Appalachia rely heavily on natural and historical assets; few can survive, much less thrive, without the lure of natural beauty, heritage sites, or cultural or artistic distinctions. Yet these attributes by themselves cannot guarantee success in tourism. Communities with effective tourism programs also develop and sustain a strong culture of tourism, which is made up of three important characteristics:

- It has an *awareness* of the needs, complexities, and limitations of tourism.
- It promotes a *welcoming* environment for visitors.
- It is *entrepreneurial* and accepts risk on the path towards rewards.

Unfortunately, while these qualities may seem straightforward in terms of their importance, they are not always evident in communities throughout the Region. In fact, a lack of awareness related to a community's tourism efforts, as well as low levels of entrepreneurship throughout Appalachia, were frequently cited by respondents to the stakeholder survey. The findings were further underscored by site visits, as many local officials also discussed the needs and challenges of creating and maintaining a welcoming environment. Comments included:

"Silos. Everyone is doing something, and one hand doesn't know what the other is doing. Lack of leadership, lack of funding, lack of effectively getting the word out, and bad attitudes all are problems."

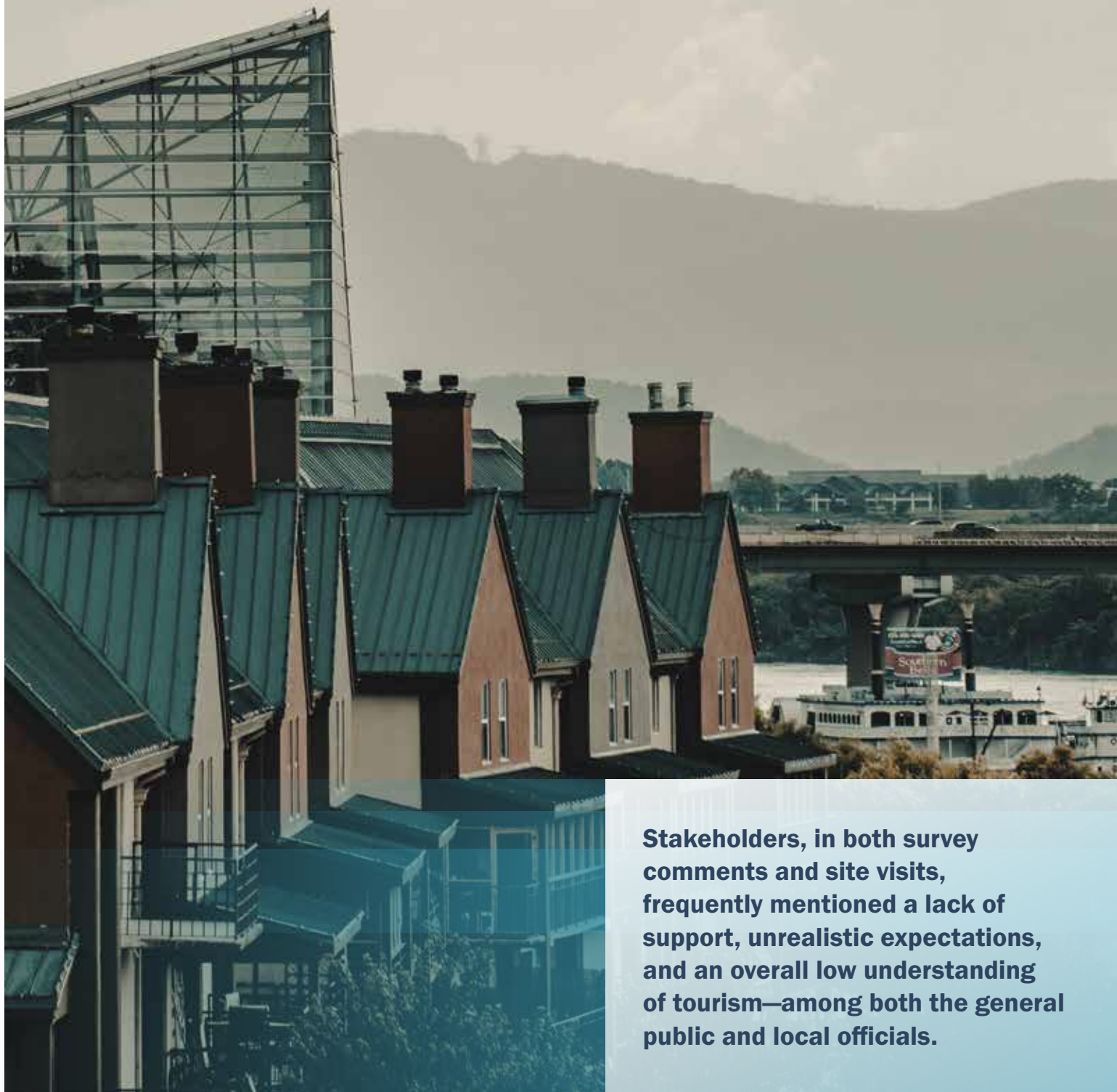
"Most days in my job, I feel like what is the point. Each year I keep thinking it will get better, but my budget never increases."

"Our county has much potential, but resources are limited and the county and city have other priorities. If they could only see tourism development as an investment, but they don't seem to be patient enough to let that investment go to work."



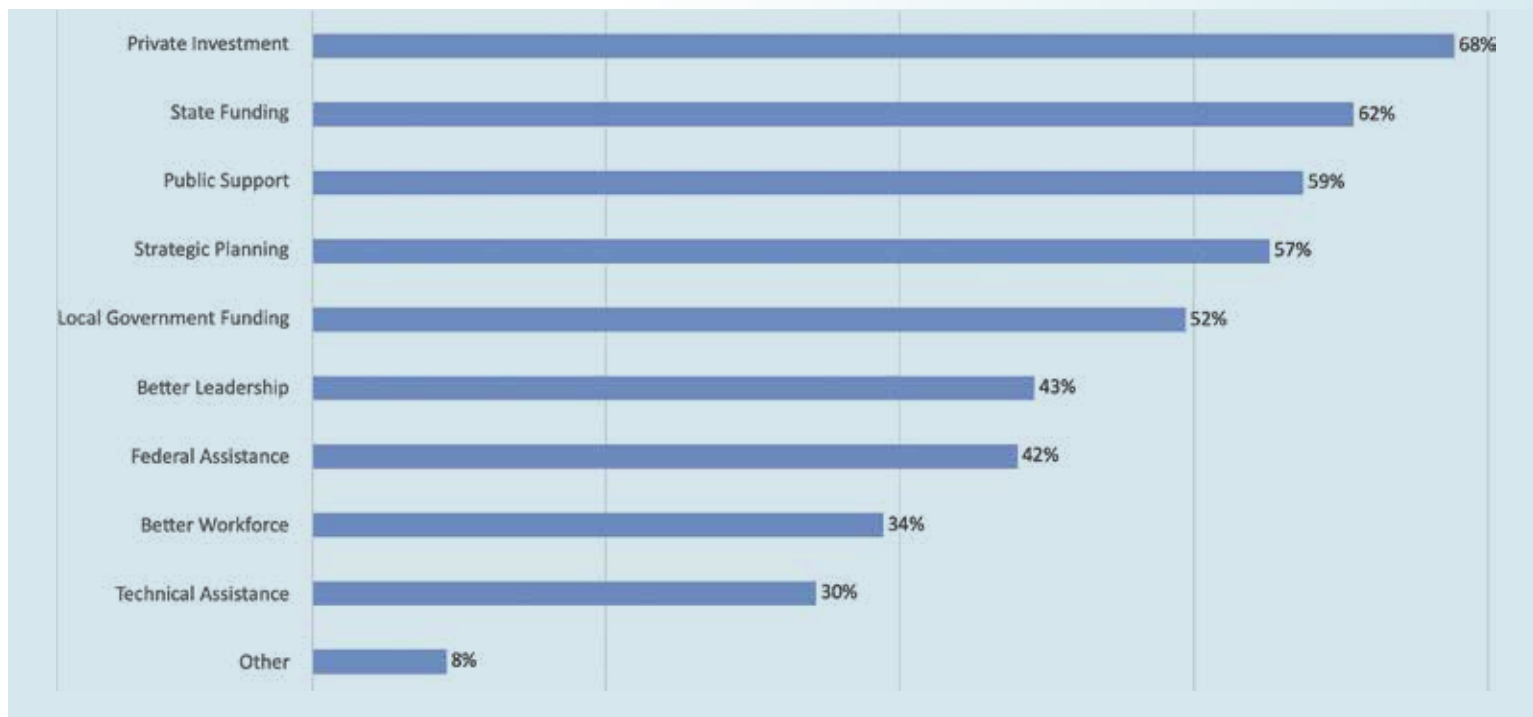
This welcome mat from Erwin, Tennessee serves as a metaphor for tourism culture.

While these comments highlight frustrations, there are also communities with effective leadership and coordinated tourism strategies that have led to positive outcomes. Case studies included as part of this report, such as those in Boone and Erwin, demonstrate the power of effective planning and marketing. These communities, and many others like them, provide important lessons in creating a local culture of tourism.



Stakeholders, in both survey comments and site visits, frequently mentioned a lack of support, unrealistic expectations, and an overall low understanding of tourism—among both the general public and local officials.

f11.2 Stakeholders' community needs



Increasing Awareness

Stakeholders, in both survey comments and site visits, frequently mentioned a lack of support, unrealistic expectations, and an overall low understanding of tourism—among both the general public and local officials. “*Nobody knows what tourism is!*” was a frequent complaint among stakeholders. Specific issues cited included the following:

- Unrealistic expectations about tourism: Stakeholders stated that officials and members of the public mistakenly viewed tourism as a panacea for local issues, thinking that it could fully replace lost industries, and also that it was “easy.”
- Low awareness of costs: Stakeholders in many communities felt that investments in tourism were often dismissed or negated. Many public officials, they believed, saw little value in dedicated tourism staffing or marketing efforts.
- Low appreciation of the complex nature of tourism: Stakeholders found that officials sometimes failed

to appreciate the complexity of tourism and its interconnectedness to other considerations, such as infrastructure, housing, healthcare, traffic, and environmental concerns.

To remedy these challenges, many sought additional training and funding opportunities. “We could really use funds,” one stakeholder wrote, “to support the better organization, development and advertisement of educational workshops.” Another added: “Send speakers to our counties that offer planning advice, grant writing advice, and ways to improve that don’t cost a lot of money.”

The overall survey results reflect these concerns. While private financial investment topped the stakeholders’ list of needs, government funding, public support, and better leadership also scored high. Forty-three percent of stakeholders surveyed wanted better local leadership, and 59% expressed a desire to have more public support. Related to these are the 57% of stakeholders who said strategic planning was needed, and the 30% who cited technical assistance as a need.

Many states outside of the Region have also struggled with tourism development in rural areas. In some of these states, their programs and strategies could serve as a model for Appalachian communities. For example, Oregon created the Rural Tourism Studio, “a robust training program designed to help rural communities develop and offer high-value, authentic experiences to travelers—in a sustainable, manageable way.”

The Oregon Rural Tourism Studio is a community-based workshop series that helps communities develop a shared tourism vision and strategy. Core workshop modules include sessions on visioning and planning, marketing, and team building. Additional workshops include sessions on culinary tourism, outdoor recreation, and cultural heritage tourism. Communities participating in the program are required to commit to a two-year process that also includes planning, outreach, and implementation tasks. Participants must also create leadership and action teams composed of community leaders and stakeholders. Communities that complete the process become eligible for \$20,000 matching grants for local projects.¹¹⁴

The Colorado Rural Academy for Tourism (CRAFT) is designed to provide support and education for rural communities on how to build tourism into an economic development strategy.

Utah’s Office of Tourism is promoting rural travel through “Rourism,” a statewide program designed to improve visitor experiences, develop rural travel infrastructure, and increase the capacity of small communities to expand tourism and extend travel seasons. As part of the program, a consultant conducted an inventory of rural tourism activities across the state. The consultant then visited four communities

The following workshops and events will be offered as part of the program:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Jan 24
4 p.m.–8 p.m.
North Bend | Community Tourism Visioning Event
Determine the essence of this destination, create the future and galvanize community members in working toward the fulfillment of this common purpose |
| Jan 25
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
North Bend | Community Tourism Planning Workshop
Set a path for sustainable tourism based on current trends and local assets |
| Feb 21
5 p.m.–8 p.m.
Charleston | Adventure Travel & Outdoor Recreation Networking Event
Learn about key tourism projects in the area related to this sector and network with your peers |
| Feb 22
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Charleston | Adventure Travel & Outdoor Recreation Workshop
Work collaboratively to design strategies and business opportunities to develop the outdoor recreation and adventure travel market for this region |
| Mar 21
5 p.m.–8 p.m.
Bandon | Culinary & Agritourism Networking Event
Learn about key tourism projects in the area related to this sector and network with your peers |
| Mar 22
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Bandon | Culinary & Agritourism Workshop
Create ways for better connecting your local agricultural markets with the visitor industry to strengthen your local economy |
| Apr 18
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
North Bend | Tourism Marketing & Communications Workshop
Learn tourism marketing best practices, how to plug into existing marketing efforts and how to develop a tourism marketing plan for your region and business |
| Apr 19
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
North Bend | Teaming for Impact & Action Planning Workshop
Establish powerful local action teams in order to bring ideas developed during the program to fruition |
| Apr 19
5 p.m.–8 p.m.
Coos Bay | Community Celebration Event
Participants share their vision of tourism for the region and celebrate program completion |

f11.3

As this example shows, the Oregon Rural Tourism Studio offers a full complement of training sessions for participants.

Source: https://industry.traveloregon.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Southern-Oregon-Coast-Rural-Tourism-Studio_Program-brochure.pdf

¹¹ Travel Oregon, “Rural Tourism Studio,” <https://industry.traveloregon.com/opportunities/programs-initiatives/oregon-tourism-studios/rural-tourism-studio/>.



as a tourist. Acting as a “secret shopper,” he recorded his experiences. He then used these findings to help the four communities develop tourism plans and strategies.

Utah’s consultant, Roger Brooks, also recorded these efforts and created a series of instructional videos for communities across the state. Rural communities could apply for Rourism funding to utilize these videos or work directly with the consultant. Participating communities have used this program to address a wide range of issues, including branding and marketing programs, signage and gateway improvements, and infrastructure upgrades.¹¹⁵

In addition to the Rourism Program, Utah also provides assistance to communities through its Rural Planning Group. This program provides technical assistance to communities on a variety of issues, some directly related to tourism. These include online videos related to strong towns and trail conservation, an online toolkit for rural communities,

hosting an outdoor recreation summit, and specialized publications, such as a guide for dark sky planning directed at local leaders.¹¹⁶

The most comprehensive tourism capacity-building program is Colorado’s CRAFT program. Established in 2018, the Colorado Rural Academy for Tourism (CRAFT) aims to provide training and support for rural economic development through creation and branding of new or enhanced traveler experiences. The program is designed to provide support and education for rural communities on how to build tourism into



Colorado’s CRAFT program provides hands-on technical assistance to rural communities.

¹¹⁵ Utah Office of Tourism, “Rourism,” <https://travel.utah.gov/uncategorized/rourism/>; U.S. Travel Association, “National State Tourism Directors Mercury Awards,” <https://ustravel.secure-platform.com/a/gallery/rounds/3/details/1709>.

¹¹⁶ Utah Department of Workforce Services, Rural Planning Group, <http://www.ruralplanning.org>.

an economic development strategy. The program includes four elements: CRAFT Studio 101, CRAFT Studio 201, CRAFT Workshops, and CRAFT Mentor. These elements include the following components:

CRAFT Studio 101:

This is a 12-week program that provides broad, comprehensive tourism education and training for rural communities and regions on how to build tourism into an economic development strategy. It is recommended for a group of partners within a community or region that is in the early stages of exploring tourism development. Participating communities gain knowledge on rural tourism, visitor readiness, tourism entrepreneurship, marketing and social media, cultural and heritage tourism, agritourism, outdoor adventure tourism, cycling tourism, and sustainable tourism. These communities are required to participate in six in-person training sessions and complete online training. They are also required to work on a tourism-related group project. After successful completion of this program, participating communities are eligible to apply for up to \$10,000 in funding to implement a key priority identified during the program.

CRAFT Studio 201:

This is a 100-hour program that provides customized support for communities and regions wishing to advance a specific tourism-related goal or strategy. It is usually completed in six to eight months and is recommended for a group of tourism partners within a community or region with identified tourism assets and an existing promotional strategy. Participants are paired with a peer expert based on the specific needs of the community. The program provides up to 100 hours of individualized consulting assistance with a mentor. This includes at least one in-person site visit and multiple consultations. These collaborations result in increased visitations, increased awareness, and new or expanded promotional or development plans. Communities that complete the process are eligible for up to \$7,500 in implementation funds.

CRAFT Workshops:

These workshops cover topics such as culinary tourism, agritourism, heritage and cultural tourism, outdoor adventure tourism, cycling tourism, and sustainable tourism. They provide intensive training and work for communities or regions wishing to advance a tourism-related strategy relating to specific industry segments. The workshops typically last

The tourism industry is based on the near-universal value of welcoming the stranger. Communities that benefit from tourism cannot choose and should not pre-judge the nature of those strangers. Those who are unwelcoming to some will likely be seen as unwelcoming to all.

one to two days and are recommended for a group of tourism partners within a community or region. Communities that successfully host a workshop become eligible for a \$2,500 CRAFT Workshop Implementation Grant.

CRAFT Mentor:

This program provides up to 50 free hours of mentoring for organizations or businesses working to advance a specific tourism-related goal or strategy. It stimulates the development of high-quality cultural, heritage, agricultural, and outdoor adventure tourism experiences in Colorado. Organizations that complete the program are eligible for up to \$1,000 in implementation funds.¹¹⁷

While Colorado's CRAFT program is only two years old, it has already begun to show benefits for the state's rural communities. Rio Blanco County, a remote mountainous county in the western part of the state, participated in the inaugural year of the program. Since then the county, which experienced job losses due to the decline of oil shale extraction, has improved its marketing efforts and submitted applications for additional marketing assistance

¹¹⁷ Colorado Tourism Office, "Colorado Rural Academy for Tourism (CRAFT)," <https://industry.colorado.com/colorado-rural-academy-tourism-craft>.

grants. Likewise, the San Luis Valley Museum Association, an organization in rural south-central Colorado, used Craft's mentoring program to create a new marketing plan. The resulting improvements increased web traffic by 500%. Member museums saw an increase in visitations, on average, of more than 40%. One museum saw attendance grow by more than 200%.¹¹⁸

The tourism development programs described in Oregon, Utah, and Colorado have proven to be effective tools for increasing tourism capacity and helping develop a culture of tourism. They do so by offering hands-on and face-to-face assistance to a wide range of local stakeholders, including local leaders. They also offer mentoring relationships and helpful external assessments that assist communities in identifying local assets and confronting local barriers.

Creating a Welcoming Environment

"The people are simply wonderful. Everyone is so nice."

¹¹⁸ Colorado Tourism Office, "Rio Blanco Case Study," <https://www.colorado.com/sites/default/files/Rio%20Blanco%20County.%20Blueprint%202.0%20Colorado%20Tourism%20Promotion%20%26%20Development.%20Case%20Study%20Final%20%281%29.pdf>; Colorado Tourism Office, "Delta County Case Study," <http://industry.colorado.com.pluto.milesmedia.com/sites/default/files/DeltaCountyBlueprint20TourismPromotionDevelopmentCaseStudyFinal.pdf>.

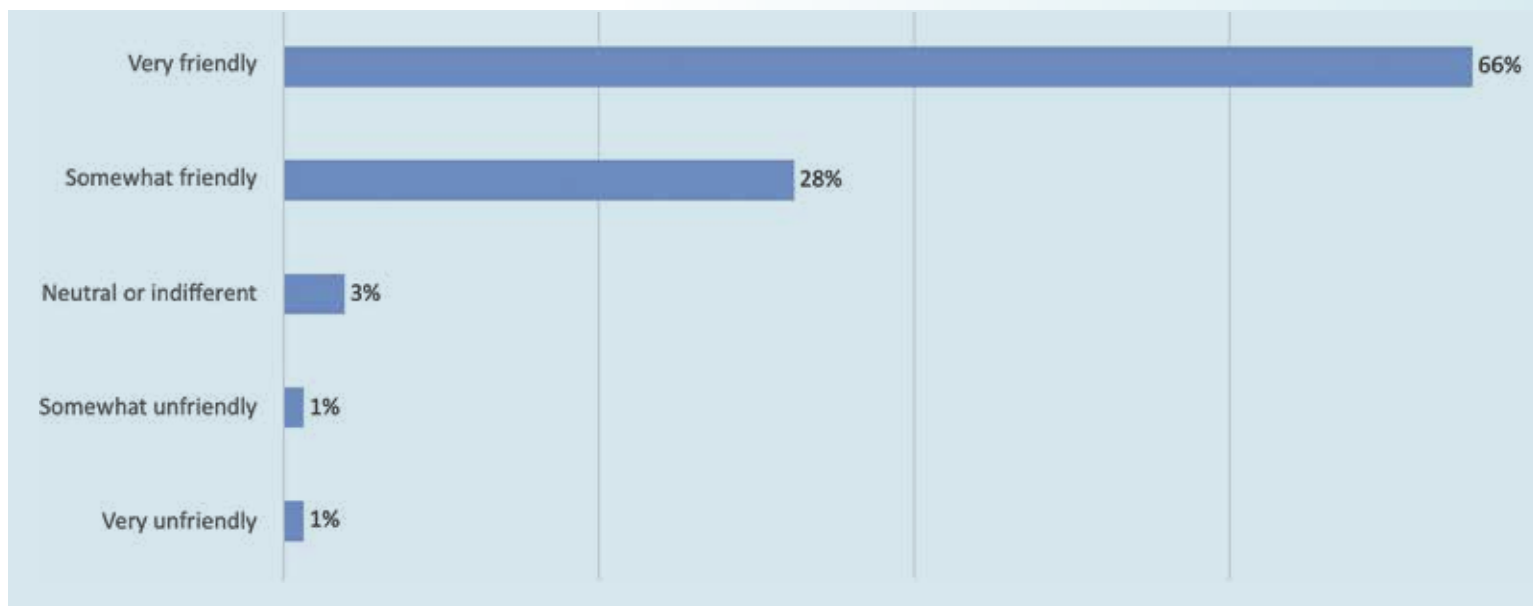
This comment, made by a visitor to the Region, is representative of the majority of responses received on the visitor survey. In general, Appalachian communities are viewed as welcoming places, with about two-thirds of respondents finding local residents to be "very friendly," and only 2% finding local residents to be either "somewhat" or "very unfriendly."

While the majority of communities in the Region are seen as welcoming to tourism, some stakeholders expressed concerns about an excess of tourism. However, this was just a small percentage of respondents to the stakeholder survey: Only about 1% felt like their communities had "too much tourism." Others expressed concerns about gentrification, traffic, and other tourism-related issues. As one stakeholder wrote:

"I have been all for increasing tourism for many years until just recently. Now I think the area might be better off without the traffic and outsider problems. People visit then want to move here and take over. Many of the newcomers seem to lack common courtesy and manners. They are bringing in more crime... lots of reason to perhaps want to curb tourism!"

Appalachian scholars have long argued that the region has historically served as a de facto colony for urban and industrial America, a region used to supply cities with food, energy, raw

f11.5 Visitors' perceptions of local friendliness



materials, and cheap unskilled labor. As with a colony, this relationship has not always proven reciprocal. Wealth flowing out of the region does flow back equitably. Tourism, when viewed in this context, might be viewed similarly. The Region now provides access to undeveloped areas and outdoor recreation tended by low wage service jobs.¹¹⁹

Welcoming concerns are perhaps most relevant when dealing with diverse tourism populations. As noted in Chapter Five, based on the visitor survey—which may not be representative of travel in the Region as a whole—travel to Appalachian destinations is low among nonwhite populations, particularly African Americans. While nearby cities such as Washington, Atlanta, and Charlotte boast a substantive and growing number of Black middle-class and professional households, a low percentage of these families are visiting the Region.

The reasons for this lack of visitation are complex, and while they're different for each individual and family, for some the reasons may be rooted in cultural norms and historical experiences; feelings of safety; and perceptions, correct or otherwise, of rural communities. These issues are not confined to one part of Appalachia, as several of the case study communities reported issues related to diversity.¹²⁰

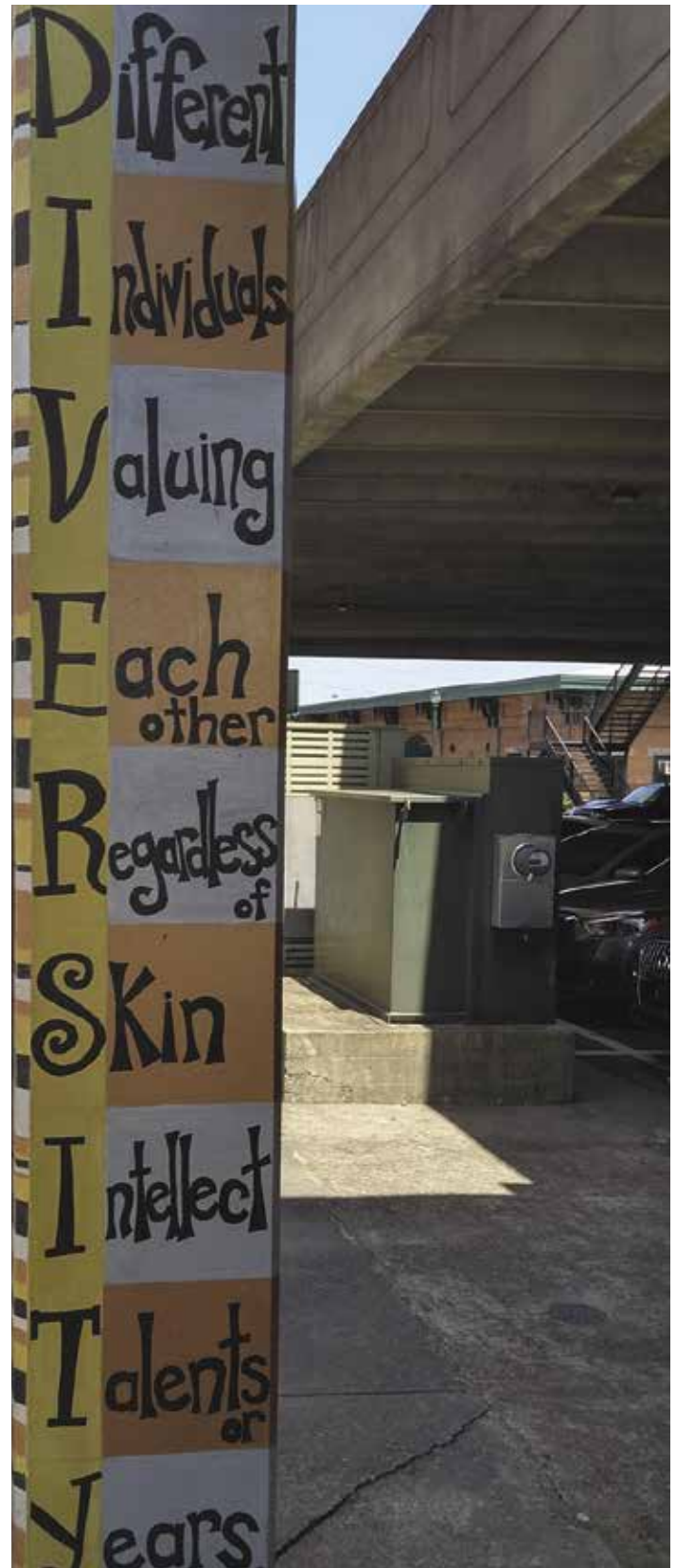
Also related to diversity, same-sex households are a fast-growing segment of the tourism economy. While about 1% of U.S. households camp regularly, 8% of same-sex households are camping enthusiasts. Almost half of these households camp with children.¹²¹

The tourism industry is based on the near-universal value of welcoming the stranger. Communities that benefit from tourism cannot choose and should not pre-judge the nature of those strangers. Those who are unwelcoming to some will likely be seen as unwelcoming to all. Turning away underrepresented visitors will, inevitably, also turn off visitors from the majority. In today's age of social media, this is not just bad manners—it is also bad business.

¹¹⁹Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins, *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

¹²⁰Jerry Lee and David Scott, *Racial Discrimination and African Americans' Travel Behavior: The Utility of Habitus and Vignette Technique*, *Journal of Travel Research*, 2017, Vol. 56(3) 381–392; Goodrid, Matthew Charles. (2018). *Racial Complexities of Outdoor Spaces: An Analysis of African American's Lived Experiences in Outdoor Recreation*. University of the Pacific, Thesis.

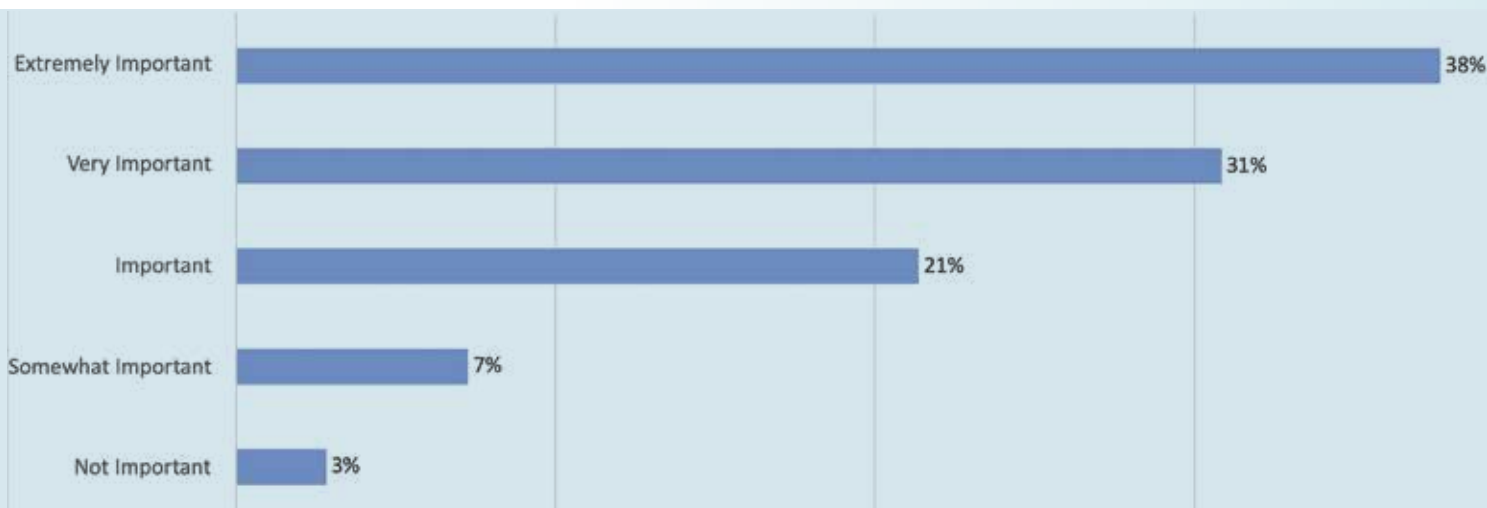
¹²¹ Cairn Consulting, "North American Camping Report," 9.



f11.6

The message on this pillar in Dalton, Georgia's downtown parking garage extends a positive welcome to all visitors.

f11.7 Importance of increased access to capital for tourism growth, according to stakeholders



Education and engagement play a vital role in creating a welcoming environment. Hospitality training—at all levels—is essential. This training should include modules to help workers interact with diverse visitors. Local leaders should also stress the benefits of positive interactions with tourism staff and local business owners. Signage and marketing materials can also be designed to convey acceptance of diverse visitors.

When necessary, tools afforded local government can also be employed to promote welcoming. These can include codes enforcement, design reviews, and incentive programs. When, for example, residents of a low-income senior housing complex harassed visitors to Jamestown from their sidewalk smoking area, local officials imposed new smoking restrictions. Similarly, Berea stepped in to regulate vendor signage at a public festival to reduce divisive messaging. By taking these steps, the communities helped protect important public investments and preserve revenues that fund public services and amenities.

Promoting Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the third core component of a culture of tourism. In many Appalachian communities, it can also be the most challenging element to build. Entrenched norms, economic limitations, and a lack of training all contribute to low levels of entrepreneurship in some areas. Stakeholders

in several case study communities expressed frustration with entrepreneurship and small business development. Frequent concerns include the following:

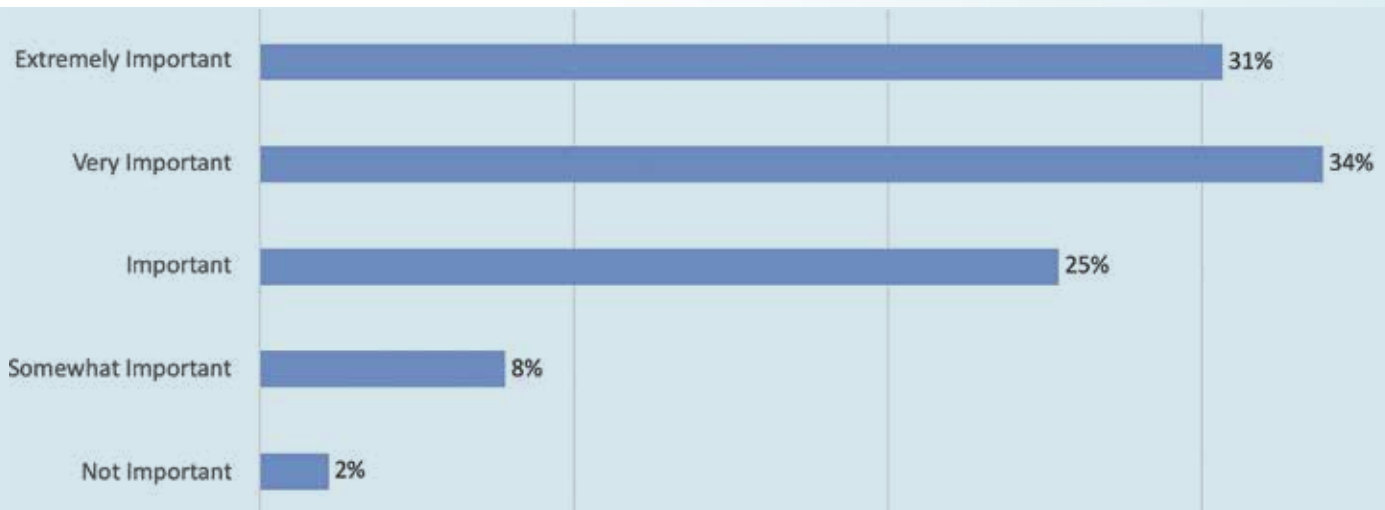
- Lack of access to capital
- Lack of capacity
- Aversion to risk
- Physical constraints

Stakeholders in several communities stated that entrepreneurs and small businesses faced many difficulties when it came to accessing capital. In many cases, there was a perception that banks were reluctant to make loans to local businesses, and that many local borrowers could not qualify for funds. Survey results reflect this view, with 90% of respondents considering increased access to capital as “important” or higher when it comes to growing local tourism.

Limited access to capital may be particularly detrimental to tourism. Important amenities, such as restaurants, hotels, and food trucks, require significant start-up funding. Compounding these issues is limited access, among some residents, to the banking system. Poor credit, bank consolidations, and strict lending guidelines may further



Importance of entrepreneurial assistance for tourism growth, according to stakeholders



limit access to capital. Appalachian entrepreneurs are also much less likely to obtain capital from family members or friends than residents of other regions. Entrepreneurs from historically marginalized groups may also face additional discriminatory barriers.¹²²

A 2013 ARC report on the banking landscape in Appalachia after the recession of 2007–2009 made a number of recommendations to help improve access to capital across the Region. These included the following:

- Increased branch banking, which means that banks have a presence at various retail and storefront locations—not just at the banks themselves.
- Increased use of Community Reinvestment Act resources.
- Expanded support for community-based and nonprofit loan and support programs.
- Increased opportunities for equity financing.

It remains unclear whether these are being implemented, particularly in the most distressed and rural parts of Appalachia. Survey results and findings from the case studies suggest that these areas continue to struggle with small business financing issues.¹²³

An interesting and informative exception to these capital constraints can be found among the Region's immigrant entrepreneurs. Immigrants play an important role in the tourism industry, both as service workers and, increasingly, as small business owners. These populations not only exhibit higher rates of entrepreneurship, but they also have better access to capital through strong kinship networks and higher rates of personal savings. Some also benefit from community-based revolving credit associations and informal lending networks.¹²⁴

The 2013 report from ARC also recommended increased technical assistance for business owners and entrepreneurs. Stakeholders across the Region identify a lack of business know-how and experience as a major cause of failed businesses. Many also believe that these

¹²² Josh Silver and Archana Pradhan, *Access to Capital and Credit in Appalachia and the Impact of the Financial Crisis and Recession on Commercial Lending and Finance in the Region*, Appalachian Regional Commission, July 2013, 17-26, 215-223.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 14-16.

¹²⁴ Robert Fairlie, "Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Small Business Owners, and their Access to Financial Capital," U.S. Small Business Association, May, 2012, 21-23; Timothy Bates, "Financing Small Business Creation: The Case of Chinese and Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurs," *Journal of Business Venturing*, Volume 12, Issue 2, March 1997, Pages 109-124; John S. Butler and George Kozmetsky, eds., *Immigrant and Minority Entrepreneurship: The Continuous Rebirth of American Communities* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 171-192.



f11.9

Aggressive codes enforcement can help eliminate issues related to vacant storefronts.

failures deter other entrepreneurs, as they often increase perceptions of risk. As such, it is not surprising that entrepreneurship assistance is rated as “important” or higher by 90% of stakeholders surveyed.

As demonstrated in Chapter 10, community-based peer mentoring programs are an effective way to build tourism capacity in rural areas. This same approach is also being used to promote entrepreneurship in some areas. Enterprise facilitation—which pairs potential entrepreneurs with a facilitator, also known as a “coach,” who then serves as a confidential adviser and point of contact for participants—is being used in rural communities across the world, including some places in Appalachia.

Entrepreneurs also work with a community board of 20 to 50 local residents. This group, which includes local officials, business leaders, and other key stakeholders, gives technical advice to new entrepreneurs, assists them with important tasks, and gives them a support network as they move forward with their business plans.

A handful of communities in Appalachia have recently begun to utilize this approach and similar strategies, with the results of these efforts being largely positive. Long-running efforts in rural Kansas have also yielded positive results.¹²⁵

In some communities, there may also be physical barriers to

small business development. Empty downtown storefronts are not always a symptom of low entrepreneurship; instead, they might be indicative of absentee, negligent, or unrealistic property owners. This is especially true in some small towns, where downtown buildings fall into the hands of distant heirs, or they may be owned by a small cadre of local residents with unrealistic expectations regarding value, rents, and revenues. This neglect robs entrepreneurs of spaces for new businesses, which could in turn help revitalize small downtowns.

Fortunately, municipalities have tools to confront these issues. As mentioned in Chapter 8, codes enforcement and demolition by neglect ordinances can be used to compel property owners to maintain their property, lease it (at a fair market rate), use it, or sell it to someone who will use and maintain it.¹²⁶

Analysis

Successful destination communities develop and engender a culture of tourism. This culture promotes tourism knowledge and awareness, encourages welcomeness, and fosters entrepreneurship. Building this culture is not always easy, but the approaches and strategies discussed in this chapter can help with its development. These include the following:

- Communities should be aware what tourism is, and also what it isn't.
- Communities should be welcoming to all travelers. Those who are unwelcoming to some will likely be seen as unwelcoming to all.
- Community-based face-to-face mentoring programs are effective ways to build capacity and promote entrepreneurship in rural areas.
- Increasing access to capital throughout the Region would benefit entrepreneurs and small business owners, including those involved with the tourism industry.
- Tools used to protect and improve the built environment, such as local building codes, also play a role in promoting entrepreneurship. This again stresses the importance of codes enforcement in maintaining healthy and vibrant communities.

¹²⁵ Eric A. Scorsone and Kathleen Powers, “Entrepreneurial Facilitation: Approaches for Boosting Entrepreneurship in Local Economic Development,” <https://www.comm-dev.org/images/pdf/cd-practice-issue-11.pdf>; Don Macke and Deborah Markley, “Enterprise Facilitation in Kansas: Lessons and Recommendations,” Entrenworks Consulting, 2005; Northeast Kansas Enterprise Facilitation, <https://nekef.org>.

¹²⁶ Center for Community Progress, “Dealing with Problem Property Owners,” <https://www.communityprogress.net/problem-property-owners-pages-201.php>.



Successful destination communities develop and engender a culture of tourism. This culture promotes tourism knowledge and awareness, encourages welcomeness, and fosters entrepreneurship.

Case Study: Boone, North Carolina

Boone, North Carolina, is a small city with big assets. Located in Watauga County, the community is in the center of the High Country of North Carolina and minutes from established resorts, such as Blowing Rock and Banner Elk. Boone is also home to Appalachian State University, a public institution that is rapidly rising in both stature and enrollment.

With all of these advantages, it is little wonder why Boone is an Appalachian tourism success story. However, this success has not come easy; it's the product of decades of hard work, good decisions, and strategic investments. Because of this, the community serves as an exceptional role model for other communities across the Appalachian Region.



Downtown Boone is a hub for visitors to the High Country of North Carolina.

A Welcoming Presence

Downtown Boone is inviting, convenient, and attractive. It feels safe and is a haven for activity. Shops and restaurants are well-maintained and appear to be thriving. Streets and sidewalks are almost spotlessly clean. All of these attributes are far from accidental or coincidental. A closer look reveals strategies and investments made to create this atmosphere.

Public art and decorative plantings line the streets. Banners and ornaments on street lights promote a summer festival and an outdoor theater performance. Small pocket parks provide seating and shade. Litter receptacles and recycling stations are conveniently located on every block. Wide sidewalks and clearly marked crosswalks encourage pedestrian traffic. A pet waste station provides free bags for canine visitors.

Navigating the downtown area is made easy by sidewalk maps and clear signage. A map kiosk includes access to an ATM and multiple paper boxes filled with promotional flyers and local newspapers. The map is color coded by venue category, includes a calendar of events for the year, and even has a QR code for additional information.

Growing Businesses Through Tourism

Entrepreneurship is strong in Boone. The city plays an active role in developing new businesses, and it hosts a monthly meeting for new start-ups. Entrepreneurs also have access to local “angel fund” to help fund new enterprises.

Boone, North Carolina

“People get emboldened sitting behind a keyboard, but getting out in person gives an opportunity for productive conversations.”
– Local Official



COUNTY FACTS

County	Watuaga
Population (2017) ¹	55,121
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$28,628
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	4.5%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	28.3%
ARC status (2020) ²	Transitional

CITY FACTS

Founded (Boone) ³	1872
Miles to interstate (I-40) ⁴	42
Miles to state capitol (Raleigh, NC) ⁴	189
Miles to nearest metro area ⁴ (Winston Salem, NC and Asheville, NC)	86
Miles to nearest commercial airport (Asheville Regional Airport) ⁴	90

SOURCES

¹ “The Appalachian Region.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² “Socioeconomic Data.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ “Welcome to Town of Boone.” Accessed at <http://www.townofboone.net>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>



Businesses benefit from a very strong “buy local” program. The downtown development office also assists with innovative events and programs. During one recent promotion, for example, visitors were invited to participate in a “Where’s Waldo” challenge. Participants were invited to locate and record Waldo sightings at downtown shops. Visitors who found all the Waldos received a small prize. Businesses enjoyed increased foot traffic and more opportunities for sales.

Downtown stores also benefit from regular interaction with local leaders. City offices are located on the town’s main street. Local leaders carefully monitor downtown activity levels, and the city manager takes a daily walk through the

downtown area. During these walks he interacts with both local business and visitors to assess needs and learn about possible areas of improvement. The city also conducts regular public meetings to encourage interaction with the public.

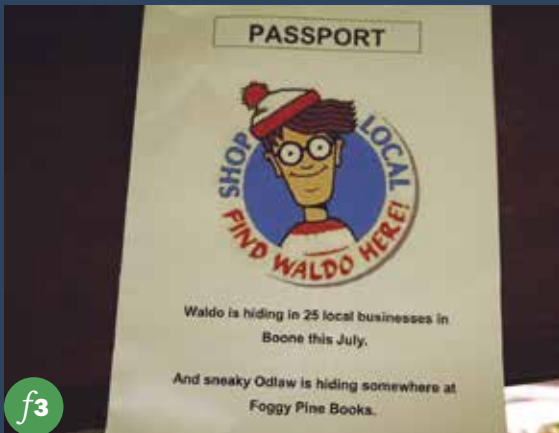
Taking Boone Online

Given the level of direct engagement, it is not surprising that Boone is also a regional leader in online media. The city and the local tourism board maintain active and attractive web pages. Both also have a robust social media presence. The tourism board’s social media campaign, which began as an “organic process,” is now becoming increasingly sophisticated. The program began with Facebook but is now increasingly



f2

Flowers on decorative streetlights enhance downtown aesthetics.



f3

Boone's "Where's Waldo" promotion helps draw visitors to local businesses.



f4

Boone has combined a local map, information bins, and an ATM to create a resource hub for visitors.



f5

A new downtown boutique hotel is a welcome addition to the city's lodging portfolio.

devoted to Instagram. Local leaders are in the process of hiring professional consultants to develop a social media plan.

Challenges Remain

While Boone is a mature and successful destination, it still has challenges to overcome. A lack of parking, a natural byproduct of success, is a constant issue in the community, and local leaders are increasingly having to invest resources in parking lots.

Like most communities, Boone has also faced problems stemming from substance abuse. While recent improvements regarding the issue have been made, concerns about its impact on the workforce remain.

The area is also dealing with changes to the lodging industry. While a new upscale downtown hotel is a welcome addition to the community, the rise of Airbnb has created regulatory challenges. Increased local controls and oversight is under discussion, but local officials are concerned about state efforts that might limit local control over short-term rentals.

While Boone benefits from having a major university, it welcomes opportunities to learn from other sources. When asked what other organizations and agencies could do to help grow tourism, local officials answered, "Sharing of best practices."

Lessons Learned

Boone offers many examples of strategies and steps that can help communities achieve tourism success. These include the following:

- Downtown Boone shows the impacts modest investments can make in improving visitor experiences. Plantings, public art, and wayfinding aids are affordable ways to create a welcoming environment.
- Boone's city government is an active partner in downtown development. Their creative assistance and dedication to engagement make them an effective asset for local businesses.
- Small business success is no accident in Boone. The community has resources dedicated to helping entrepreneurs create and sustain new businesses.

Case Study: St. Marys, Pennsylvania

Straub Brewery

“Family-owned and fiercely independent,” the Straub Brewery was founded in St. Marys, Pennsylvania, by Peter Straub in 1872. The third oldest brewery in the country, it continues to be owned and operated by members of the founding family. A cornerstone of the St. Marys community, the brewery is home to “the Eternal Tap,” a longstanding tourist draw that allows visitors to taste Straub beers for free.

In keeping with the family and community values that have made the business successful over nearly 150 years, the Straub Brewery is dedicated to the overall development and well-being of their local community, as demonstrated by their participation and commitment to the Pennsylvania Wilds.



f1

Benzinger Spring Brewery, 1895

Source: Straub Brewery

The Straub story is an American success story. Peter Straub was born in Felldorf, Württemberg, Germany, on June 28, 1850.

He initially trained as a cooper, which means that he could make and repair barrels. At the same time, he also learned how to brew beer. In 1869, he traveled to the United States, first settling in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, where he found work with the Eberhardt and Ober Brewing Company. After working for a couple of different Pennsylvania breweries, Straub moved to St. Marys in 1872. It was around this time that Peter was hired by Francis Sorg to be the brewmaster and manager for his Benzinger Spring Brewery. This was an important moment in Peter's life for multiple reasons, not least of which is that he began courting Francis Sorg's eldest daughter, Sabina, and they eventually married on November 23, 1875. The couple had ten children, and the family's commitment to brewing and good business practices has since extended down through seven generations.¹²⁷

Straub's success is rooted in its commitment to quality ingredients, which are essential to making great beer. Production includes Straub American Lager, Straub American Light Lager, Straub American Amber Lager, IPL (India Pale Lager), and the 1872 Pre-Prohibition Lager. In addition, they have a Peter Straub Signature Brews series featuring various craft beer styles, such as Kölsch Ale, Vienna Lager,

St. Marys, Pennsylvania

"It just takes time. People underestimate the amount of time it takes to build tourism in a region."
– Local Stakeholder



COUNTY FACTS

County	Elk
Population (2017) ¹	30,197
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$34,782
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	5.1%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	9.4%
ARC status (2020) ²	Competitive

CITY FACTS

Founded (Straub Brewery) ³	1872
Miles to interstate (I-80) ⁴	28
Miles to state capitol (Harrisburg, PA) ⁴	166
Miles to nearest metro area (Pittsburgh, PA) ⁴	110
Miles to nearest commercial airport (University Park, State College) ⁴	77

SOURCES

¹ "The Appalachian Region." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² "Socioeconomic Data." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ "Straub Brewery." Accessed at <https://straubbeer.com/straub-history/>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

¹²⁷ Straub Brewery, "Straub History." Accessed at <http://straubbeer.com/straub-history/>. Also Wikipedia, "Straub Brewery: History." Accessed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straub_Brewery.

Dunkel, Helles, Doppelbock, Maibock, Altbier, Oktoberfest, Pilsner, and Hefeweizen. Straub beers are brewed without preservatives, which gives their beers a shelf-life of 120 days. The beers are sold across Pennsylvania and western Ohio in bottles, as well as in barrels of various sizes. In a custom dating back to Peter Straub, Straub Brewery's barrels are circled with a bright red band (a practice that originally ensured that the barrels were returned to the brewery).

Corporate Environmental Stewardship

As part of their ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship, Straub Brewery is one of the last breweries in the country to offer reusable bottles and packaging, which they began offering with their first bottling line equipment in 1946. These returnable bottles are available at select distributors across Pennsylvania in their Lager, Light, and Amber styles. A \$5 deposit is charged at the time of purchase and is redeemable upon return.¹²⁸ Returnable bottles are transported in heavy-duty, reusable cardboard cases and dividers, which minimizes the amount of new packaging material needed.

In 2016, the Pennsylvania Resource Council honored Straub Brewery with its "Leadership in Reusable Packaging" award for their 16-ounce Straub American Lager returnable package.¹²⁹ When speaking about the award, Straub President and CEO William Brock stated, "This honor was a humbling surprise for us. We are grateful for this accolade—which recognizes Straub's 145 years of commitment to artisanal brewing traditions and stewardship, and the vital role these attributes still play despite today's trendy and crowded craft beer markets. But we also see it in a much broader light as well: as motivation for not only our own pathway into the future, but as a blueprint for other breweries and industries to embrace in their own ways."¹³⁰

Straub Brewery and Pennsylvania Wilds

For years, Straub Brewery used their "fiercely independent" motto to support their market region, sponsoring and promoting local artists, chefs, and bands. Around 2015, Straub Brewery began to collaborate with PA Wilds to better

¹²⁸ Straub Brewery, "Our Beers." Accessed at <http://straubbeer.com/our-beers/>.

¹²⁹ Wikipedia, "Straub Brewery: History." Accessed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straub_Brewery.

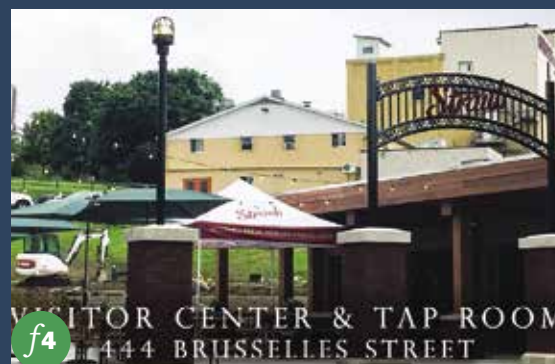
¹³⁰ The Bradford Era. "Straub Brewery Wins State Award," November 16, 2016. Accessed at http://www.bradfordera.com/news/straub-brewery-wins-state-award/article_e97e44be-ab8d-11e6-9ef0-83795c7070d9.html.



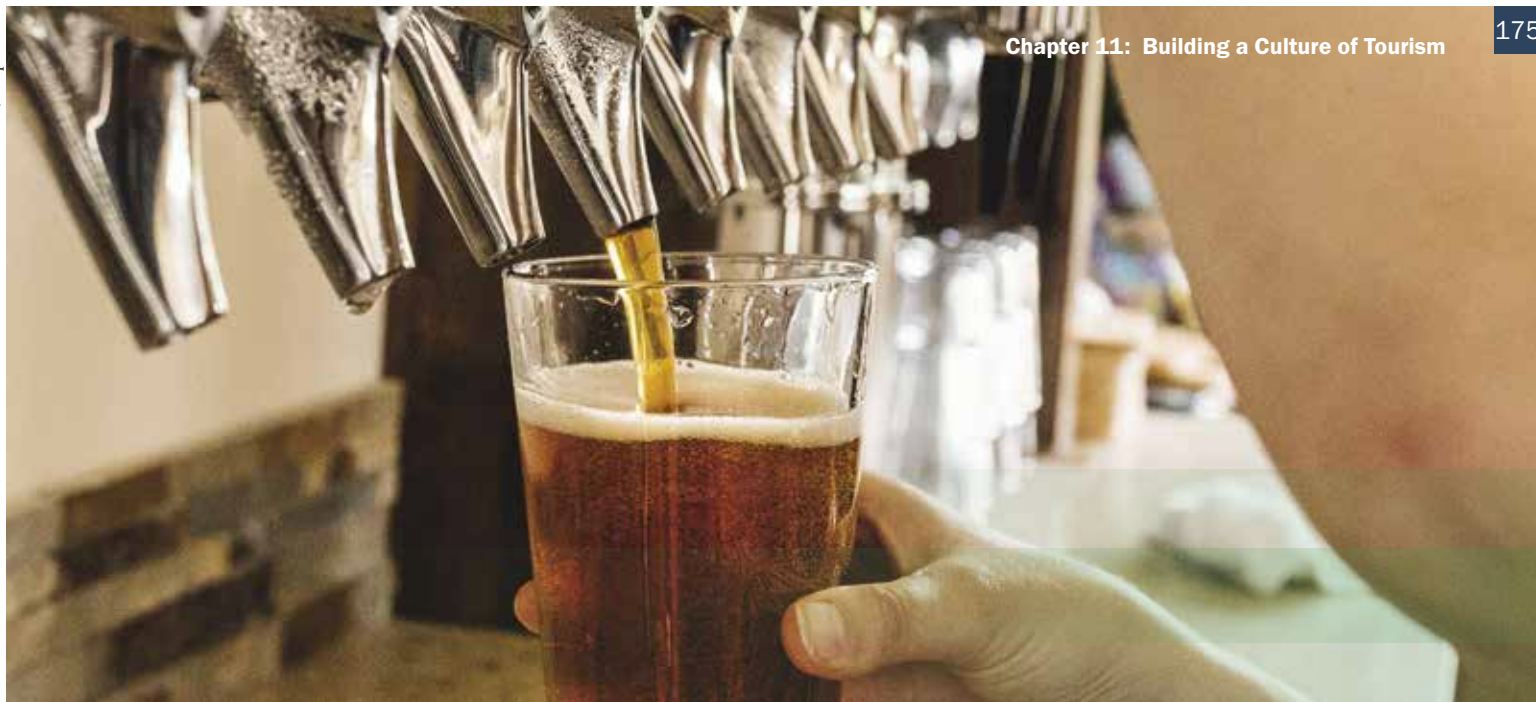
Straub's returnable and refillable bottle packaging



One of the labels for a special "Peter Straub Signature Brews Adventure Series" beer



Straub Brewery recently opened a new visitor center and tap room



align themselves with tourism in the region, while also expanding their market. With St. Marys being in Elk County and part of the Elk country landscape of PA Wilds, more and more tourists are finding their way to the brewery for tours during their trips to see the elk herds. The PA Wilds commitment to regional business and artisans was appealing to Straub, and very much kept with the spirit of Straub's "fiercely independent" ethic.

To celebrate the PA Wilds, Straub Brewery created their "Peter Straub Signature Brews Adventure Series," naming brews and designing labels with the PA Wilds in mind.

Now in their second series, the Adventure Series includes beers such as the following:

- *Tight Lines Ale Kölsch*, a tribute to the thousands of miles of trout streams, lakes, and waterways flowing throughout the PA Wilds, such as Pine Creek, First Fork, Slate Run, and the East branch of the Clarion.
- *Odo Pilot Pils*, an ode to St. Marys' native Odo Valentine, who in 1939 flew his biplane perpendicular through a 64-foot-wide center section of the Kinzua Bridge.
- *Stellar Night Dunkel*, which is as dark as the night skies over Cherry Springs State Park.

Future of Regional Tourism

Straub Brewery's management is committed to helping tourism grow in the region while at the same time maintaining the traditions and quality that have made it a St. Marys

treasure for over a century. In that spirit, the brewery is working within the region to enhance the experience of visitors, to help not only bring them to Elk County, but to also entice them to stay longer.

Straub recently opened a new visitor center, which showcases Straub's rich history and includes a relaxing beer garden. The beer garden not only attracts visitors from out of town, but also serves as a place for local residents to enjoy some downtime before heading home after work.

In addition, Straub is continuing its commitment of "creating a high tide" that helps lift other entrepreneurs and artisans throughout the region.

Lessons Learned

Straub Brewery shows the important contributions a corporate citizen can have on local tourism efforts. Lessons from this case study include the following:

- Straub's partnership efforts with the PA Wilds and other regional stakeholders demonstrates the benefits of regional cooperation and coordination.
- Staub's success shows the value of strong corporate heritage. Straub's legacy is core to its brand and has helped the company grow and thrive in a competitive market.
- Straub illustrates the importance of authentic local goods to modern travelers. Customers value Straub because it remains true to its local roots and market.

12 The Appalachian Tourism Workforce

An industry is only as good as its workforce. While this maxim applies to all forms of commerce, it is especially true in tourism, where customer experiences—both good and bad—are at the core of the economic transaction. Tourism stakeholders named workforce development as one of the most important needs for tourism growth, surpassed only by broadband expansion. Ninety-one percent of stakeholders considered workforce development to be “important” or higher in terms of promoting tourism growth.

Entry-level or front-line service workers, who often earn the lowest wages, are also vital to the industry, as they are important points of contact for visitors.

About a third of stakeholders indicated that an improved workforce is needed to address several tourism-related problems in their communities. Workforce issues cited included a lack of qualified or motivated workers, worker retention, and seasonal labor problems. The low pay common among industry workers contributes significantly to these problems. Some stakeholders also noted issues related to finding professional services, such as marketing assistance and staff trained specifically in tourism-related areas.

Workforce Programs

Appalachia has made great strides in recent years in creating an improved tourism workforce. High schools and community colleges in each of the Region’s 13 states now offer some form of culinary arts training. Available training ranges from basic skills and ServSafe training, which are available region-wide, to advanced skills training. A small number of institutions in the Region, such as Asheville Buncombe Community College, also offer craft brewing degree programs. Wine programs are less common, though Kent State University at Ashtabula offers associate degree programs in viticulture and enology. Appalachian State University offers a four-year fermentation sciences degree that serves both the wine and beer industries, the only such four-year degree program in the Region.¹³¹

Tourism management and hospitality programs are also well-represented, though not as common as culinary programs. These programs, which exist at both the four-year and two-year levels, prepare students for careers in hotels, restaurants, and event venues. Some institutions, such as Tompkins Cortland Community College in New York, offer a more specialized program in hotel and restaurant management.¹³²

Perhaps the greatest training challenge lies with entry-level or front-line service workers. Survey participants noted these

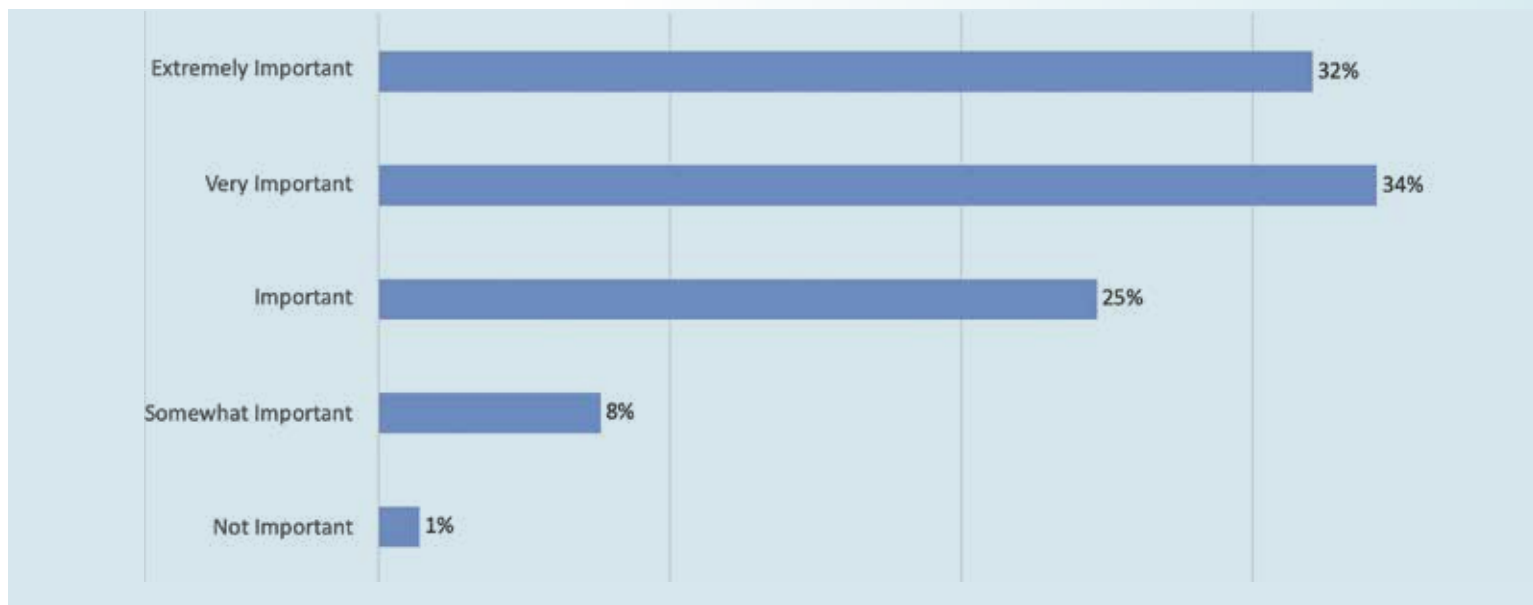
¹³¹ Asheville Buncombe Community College, “Academic Programs,” <https://www.abtech.edu/academicprograms>; Kent State Ashtabula, “Wine Degrees,” <https://www.kent.edu/ashtabula/wine/>; Appalachian State University, “Enology and Viticulture,” <https://wine.appstate.edu>.

¹³² Tompkins Cortland Community College, “Hotel and Restaurant Management,” <https://www.tompkinscortland.edu/academics/programs/hotel-and-restaurant-management>.



Tourism stakeholders named workforce development as one of the most important needs for tourism growth, surpassed only by broadband expansion.

f12.1 Importance of workforce development in growing local tourism according to industry stakeholders



issues, stating difficulty in “finding employees willing to work” and the need for “competent” and “reliable” workers. The workers, who often earn the lowest wages, are also vital to the industry, as they are important points of contact for visitors.

Life skills training, particularly programs tailored to hospitality work, can help address some of these workforce issues. Several model programs exist for the culinary industry. The best programs frame work behavior in the context of professionalism. They typically cover a wide range of topics, including personal finance, punctuality, personal hygiene, anger management, and stress management. The goal of the programs is not just to create better workers, but also to help workers make better life decisions in general.¹³³

Life skills training for hospitality workers is less common, but good models exist. Perhaps the best-known program is the Passport to Success program developed by Hilton International and the International Youth Foundation. This program consists of five training modules, experienced in-person or online, that address topics such as communication and interpersonal skills, the “hospitality mindset,” and

business etiquette and professionalism. Though designed for a global audience, the program could be an effective model for training young workers in Appalachia.¹³⁴

Community-Based Training

Many local and regional tourism boards and chambers of commerce also offer tourism and hospitality training for local workers. In 2016, for example, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area teamed with four North Carolina community colleges to conduct a series of hospitality training workshops for businesses across western North Carolina. The workshops, funded in part by the Appalachian Regional Commission, helped improve customer service skills, introduced evaluation tools, and expanded awareness of area attractions and amenities. As a bonus, the meetings also created networking opportunities for local stakeholders.¹³⁵

Another notable program is the Ambassador Program in Jamestown, New York. This program trains local business

¹³³ Sarah Mosle, “Helping Students Master the Art of Professionalism and Other Life Skills in NYC’s Culinary Industry,” <https://chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2019/04/17/teaching-culinary-arts-industry-internships-food-finance-high-school/>;

¹³⁴ Max Verstraete, “Survey Confirms the Dramatic Effects of Life Skills Training for Employees,” International Youth Foundation, <https://iyfnet.org/blog/survey-confirms-dramatic-effects-life-skills-training-employees>.

¹³⁵ Magellan Strategy Group, “Summary of Findings for BRNHA’s Gracious Hospitality Training Initiative,” <https://www.blueridgeheritage.com/wp-content/uploads/images/PDFs/Research/Summary%20of%20Research%20Findings%20for%20BRNHA%27s%20Hospitality%20Training%20022317.pdf?x40863>

owners and their staff to serve as trained ambassadors for the community. In this role, program participants help provide positive experiences for visitors, provide them with information about local attractions, and assist them with various needs, such as locating a drugstore or public restrooms.

The program, developed by the Jamestown Renaissance Corporation, was created in conjunction with the opening of the National Comedy Center. Anticipating thousands of new visitors, local officials wanted to protect their tourism investments and promote other local attractions and businesses. As one local official noted:

"We only have one chance to make that first impression. If somebody Googles or Yelp or puts something online saying they had a miserable time because they had a cold sandwich or were treated rudely, it's going to impact. And the impact of a bad review could be colossal to the whole project."¹³⁶

Program participants are trained using an online module, and training includes information about local history, local attractions, local businesses, and visitor resources (i.e., restrooms, information centers, and drugstores). Much of the training is dedicated to customer service. Topics covered include handling complaints, dealing with diverse visitors, and even interacting with celebrities. In addition, program participants are given the opportunity to visit local tourist attractions, sometimes with their families, so that they can share first-hand knowledge and enthusiasm with visitors inquiring about potential local activities.

The Jamestown Ambassador Program stands out as a low-cost way to improve both customer service and visitor experiences. It could easily be adapted for use in communities across Appalachia and should serve as a model for community-based hospitality training.¹³⁷

Tourism Industry Diversity

While tourism workers are making strides in welcoming an increasingly diverse population of visitors, the industry is also working to diversify its workforce. As travelers become more



f12.2

Businesses that participate in the Jamestown Ambassador Program are recognized with door or window signage.



f12.3

The Jamestown Ambassador Training Program includes lessons on accommodating diverse visitors. <http://jamestownrenaissance.org/downtown/ambassador/>.



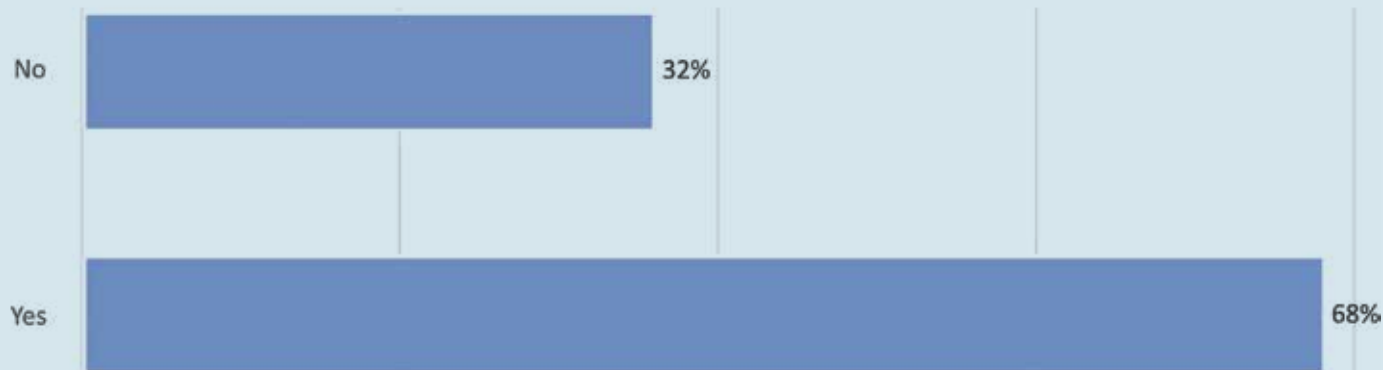
f12.4

Biltmore uses videos, like this one, to help promote a corporate culture of diversity. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=g45Xsxy4I3M

¹³⁶ WRFA, "Jamestown Renaissance Corporation to Launch 'Jamestown Ambassador' Initiative to Heighten Visitor Experience," February 16, 2018, <https://www.wrfalp.com/jamestown-renaissance-corporation-to-launch-jamestown-ambassador-initiative-to-heighten-visitor-experience/>;

¹³⁷ Jamestown Renaissance Corporation, "Jamestown Ambassador Training," <http://jamestownrenaissance.org/downtown/ambassador/>.

12.5 Percentage of tourism stakeholders who identify as Appalachian



Do you consider yourself Appalachian?

diverse and demanding of authenticity, the homogeneous nature of the workforce becomes more apparent and more problematic.

Nationally, workforce demographics are mixed. Women play a significant role in the industry, comprising the majority of positions such as desk clerks (59.5%), tour guides (54.3%), and travel agents (75.9%). Nonwhite representation, however, is, in the words of one industry observer, “worryingly low.” Nonwhites make up just 19% of travel agents and 30% of tour guides. Representation among African Americans is notably low, comprising 18% of desk clerks, and just 3.3% of both travel agents and tour guides.¹³⁸

Within Appalachia the situation may be especially pronounced. While the number of women in the industry conforms to national averages at about 60% of the total workforce, less than 3% of Appalachian tourism stakeholders surveyed identified as nonwhite. African Americans comprised less than 1% of the survey population. Given the rising importance of diverse travelers, regional businesses and employers should make strategic and deliberate efforts to expand the diversity of their workforce at all levels.

Asheville's Biltmore Estate stands out for its efforts to engage diverse populations and develop diverse and equitable workforce opportunities. The destination boasts an explicit and comprehensive nondiscrimination policy that includes all individuals “regardless of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, veteran status, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation or gender identity.” The company also actively engages with diverse community stakeholders, such as the Asheville Latino Steering Committee and local veterans’ groups.¹³⁹

On a more positive note, a significant proportion of stakeholders in the survey identified as Appalachian. Almost 70% of survey respondents considered themselves Appalachian. Interestingly, this identity appears to correlate with county population size. Respondents from large counties appear far less likely to consider themselves Appalachian. Regional identity was most evident in Central and North Central Appalachia, as defined by ARC. Appalachian identity was lowest in the Northern Appalachia subregion.

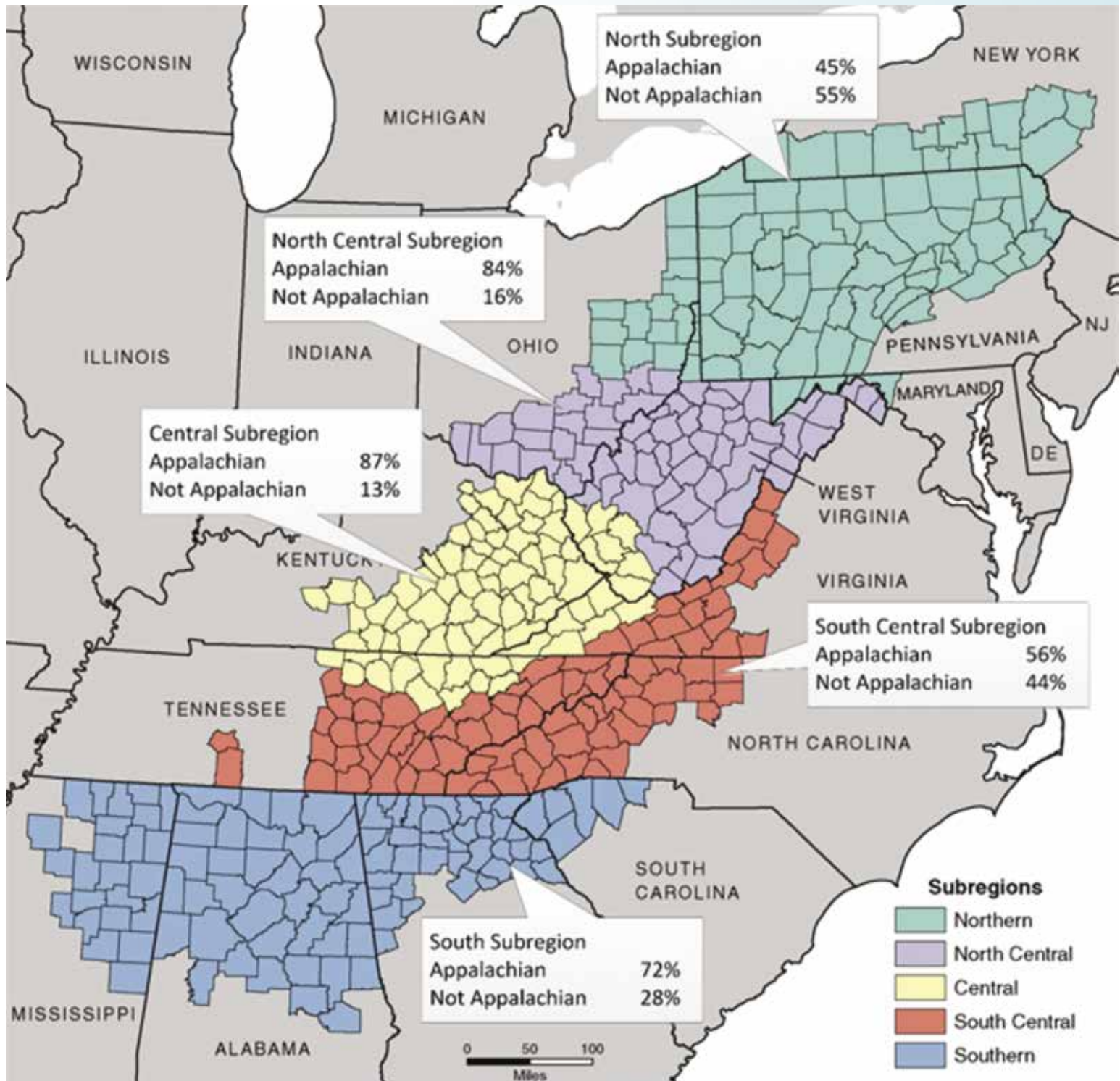
Substance Use Disorder and the Tourism Workforce

Communities and stakeholders across the Region lamented the impact of substance use disorder on their local workforce. Virtually everyone encountered shared an impact, directly

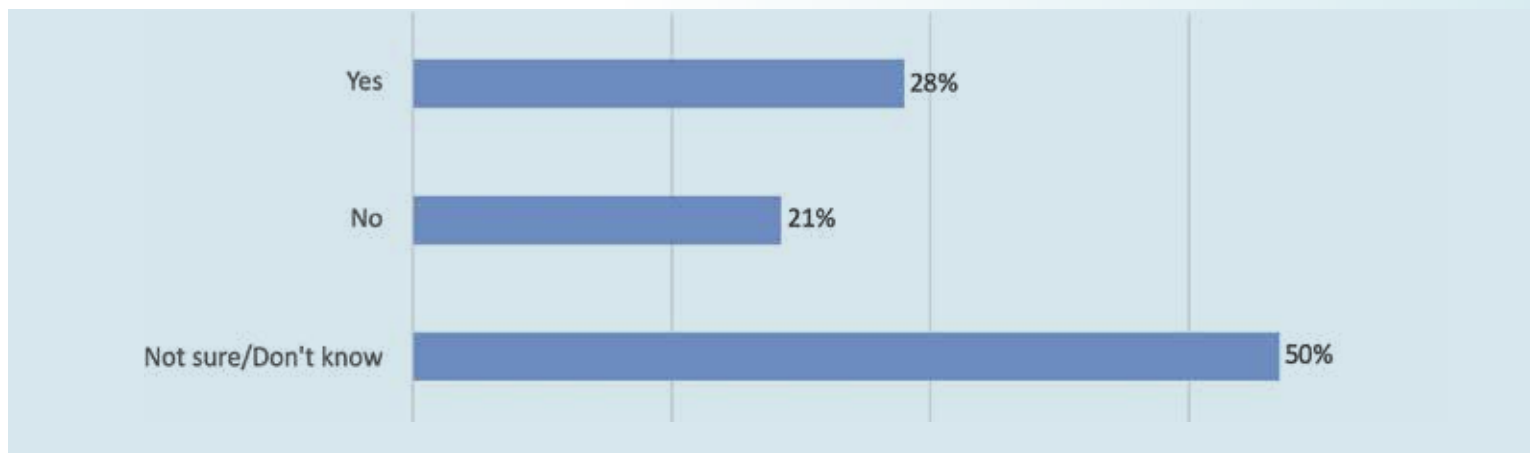
¹³⁸ Malek Murison, “Why the Travel Industry Should be a Beacon of Diversity,” Travelshift, August 24, 2016, <https://travelshift.com/travel-industry-diversity/>.

¹³⁹ Biltmore Estate, “Culture and Diversity,” <https://www.biltmore.com/careers/culture-diversity>.

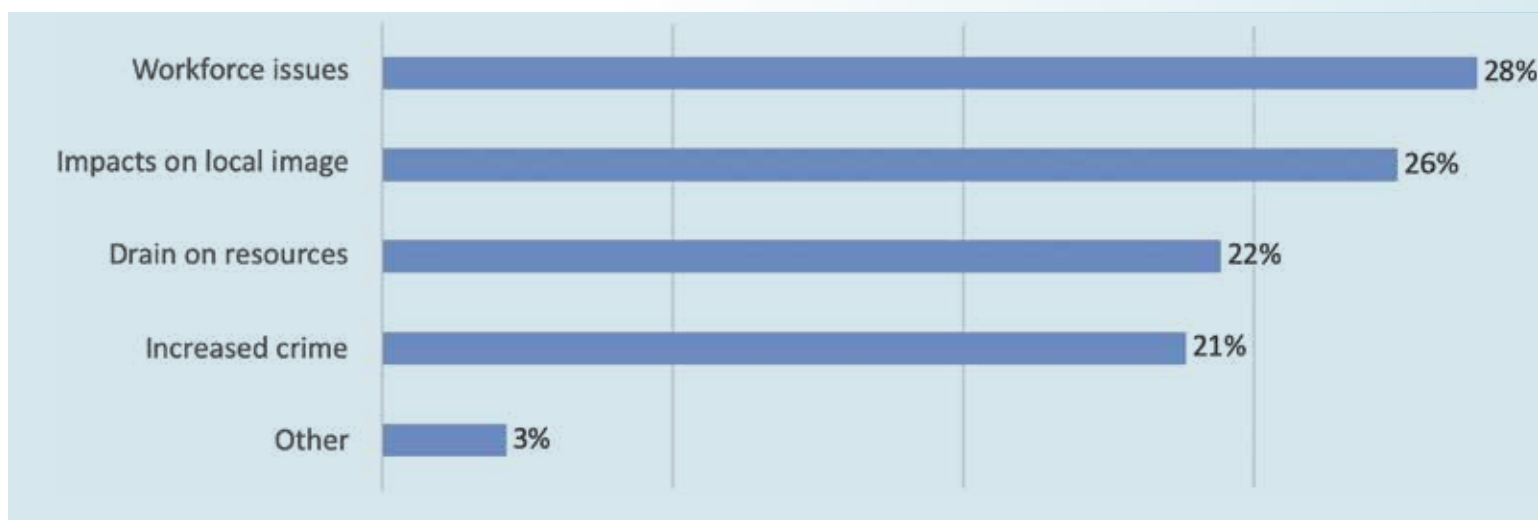
f12.6 Appalachian Identity among tourism stakeholders, by subregion



f12.7 Impact of opioids on tourism, according to stakeholders



f12.8 Opioid impacts in stakeholder communities



or indirectly, that opioids have had on someone they know. As one stakeholder commented in the survey, “No social economic demographic is exempt.” While stakeholders agreed on the community-wide impacts of opioid abuse, many were not entirely sure of its effect on tourism. While 28% of stakeholders saw a definite impact, about half were unsure of its impact.

Among those who saw impacts, the effects of opioid abuse were far-reaching. Substance use disorder not only hurt the workforce, it also created negative perceptions about communities and the Region. Comments from stakeholders

included the following:

“It is difficult to hire employees who can pass a drug test... Some folks use area hotels, and that gives them a bad name.”

“Finding people who are not on drugs to hire is not easy.”

“It greatly impacts the potential development of tourism businesses in parts of our county, because of the crime and the image that the community has from opioid users walking the streets and appearing homeless.”

“Sad to see so many people who clearly have addiction issues. Meth and opioid addictions carry telltale signs.”

Survey results reflect these diverse impacts. While workforce issues are most common, substance use disorder also had significant impacts on local resources, crime rates, and local image and reputation. Panhandling, perceptions of crime issues, and safety concerns combined to deter tourism in some areas.

The problem is especially acute in the hospitality industry. Accommodation and food service workers have the highest addiction rates of any industry. Studies conducted by the National Institutes of Health found that workers in these industries have the highest past-month illicit drug use rates

Many tourism stakeholders in the Region seem to support an expansion of addiction treatment and recovery services.

(19.1%) and the highest substance use disorder rates (16.9%). Industry culture, access to alcohol, and long and sometimes grueling work characteristics all contribute to the issues.¹⁴⁰

Solutions to this crisis are neither quick, cheap, nor easy. Increased enforcement and agency cooperation, as seen in Williamson, West Virginia, are often an important first step. Strong codes enforcement can be a useful tool in cracking down on “pill mills” and other nuisance establishments. Long-term solutions require recovery and

¹⁴⁰ Cinnamon Janzer, “Uncovering the Connection Between the Restaurant Industry & Addiction,” *Upserve: Restaurant Insider*, May 17, 2017, <https://upsolve.com/restaurant-insider/complicated-connection-restaurant-industry-addiction/>.

¹⁴¹ Sarah Young, et. al., “Emerging Practices in Property Maintenance Code Enforcement,” University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service, <https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/sites/default/files/Best%20practices%20codes%20enforcement.pdf>.

¹⁴² https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=160; https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=157



f12.9

Ben's Friends offers addiction support for restaurant workers across the Southeast and could serve as a model for Appalachian communities.

Source: www.bensfriendshope.com

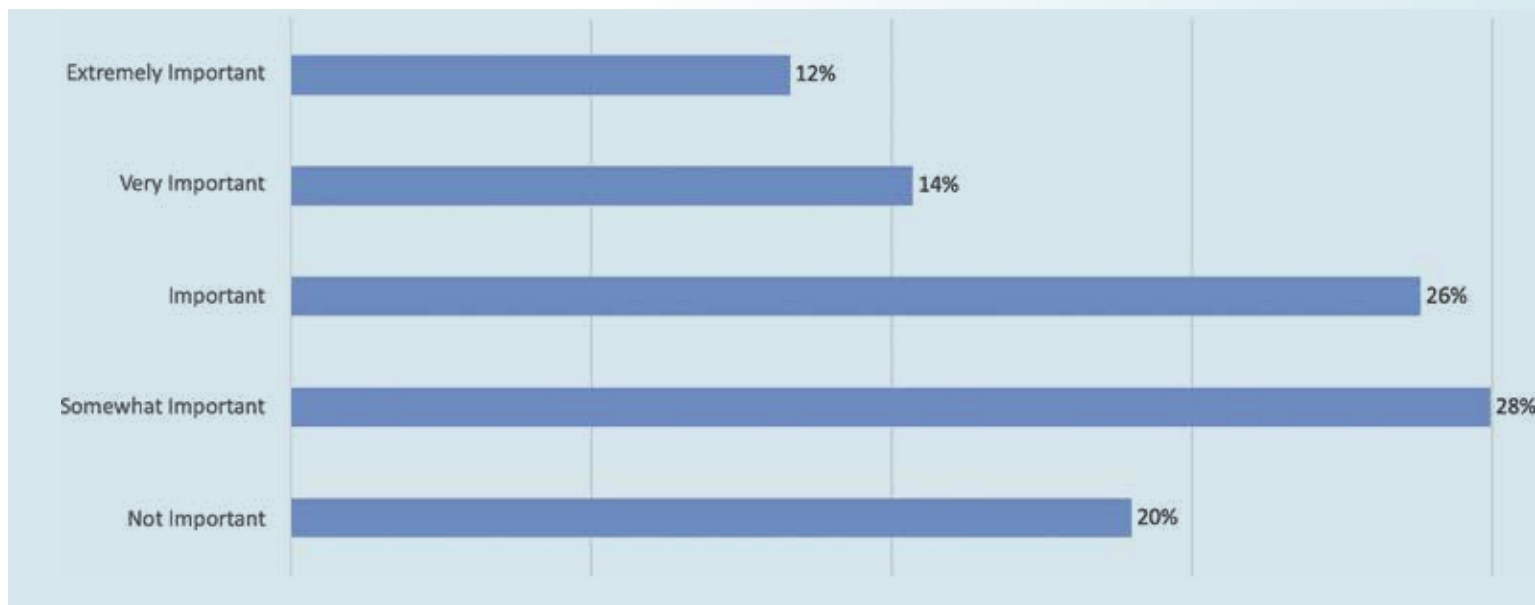
addiction-to-work programs, though these are often costly and time-consuming.¹⁴¹ ARC recently released reports highlighting strategies to curb opioid misuse in Appalachian communities.¹⁴²

Targeted strategies are beginning to emerge within the tourism industry, including industry-specific training and recovery programs. Notable examples include the following:

- *Ben's Friends* is a program similar to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, tailored to workers in the restaurant industry. Named for a chef who took his own life after addiction struggles, the program provides counseling in a safe and understanding atmosphere for workers in ten different cities, including Asheville.
- *Chefs With Issues* is a program dedicated to “the care and feeding of the people who feed us.” It helps restaurant workers address a range of issues, including addiction, depression, and eating disorders. The organization works with industry leaders to help address problems and connect workers with needed services and resources.

¹⁴³ Ben's Friends, “About,” <https://www.bensfriendshope.com>; Chefs with Issues, “About,” <http://chefswithissues.com/about/>; Restaurant Recovery, “Info,” <https://restaurantrecovery.org>.

f12.10 The importance of addiction recovery services in growing local tourism, according to stakeholders



- *Restaurant Recovery* is a nationwide program that helps restaurant workers find and pay for addiction recovery services. The organization also provides support and counseling for the families of addicted workers.¹⁴³

Though the industry may be associated with addiction, it also has the potential to create significant opportunities for people in recovery. Workers are needed to fill hospitality jobs, particularly those in the culinary arts, throughout much of the Region. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the need for chefs and head cooks to increase by 11% in the next decade, much higher than the industry average. Trained chefs enjoy higher-than-average wages and some, particularly those in corporate settings, receive benefits such as family health insurance.¹⁴⁴

Many tourism stakeholders in the Region seem to support an expansion of addiction treatment and recovery services. While just under 30% of stakeholders felt certain that the opioid crisis had impacted local tourism, more than half stated that expanding addiction treatment services was “important” or higher for growing tourism in their area.

Introducing recovery into the hospitality industry will require a change in work culture in many settings. It will also necessitate increased awareness of industry issues, improved access to recovery services and counseling, and better education for both business operators and workers-in-training.

Addressing Worker Needs

For tourism to succeed, its workers must be sober and healthy, and they must also be living in a safe and healthy environment. While the industry has begun to make strides toward addressing addiction issues, it continues to struggle, in some instances, with health and housing concerns. Affordable housing is a growing issue in tourism destinations across the country, including some areas in Appalachia. Over 60% of respondents to the stakeholder survey rated affordable housing as “important” or higher when it comes to growing tourism in their areas.

Concerns about affordable housing generally correlate with the level of tourism activity. Housing issues are most prevalent in more popular destinations, where development and growth can restrict low-cost housing options. In high-volume tourism destinations, worker housing can be a top concern for local officials, where a lack of housing can

¹⁴⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Chefs and Head Cooks, <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/food-preparation-and-serving/chefs-and-head-cooks.htm>.

f12.11 Importance of affordable housing for tourism growth, according to stakeholders



undermine tourism growth.

The recent rise of short-term rentals, such as Airbnb units, has exacerbated this problem. A 2017 study led by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that Airbnbs and other short-term rentals increase the costs of both home prices and long-term rent. Increases were proportional to occupancy rates; quite simply, residents in communities with high occupancy rates could expect to see higher housing costs than residents of areas with more available housing.¹⁴⁵

Sevier County, Tennessee, is an example of a tourism hub facing a housing crisis. The county, home to the popular tourism destinations of Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge, has a housing occupancy rate of over 99%. The county needs hundreds of additional housing units, and it's offering incentives to developers to try to meet the need. In the meantime, 44% of jobs in the county belong to people who commute from other counties. And some of those who do live in the area are forced to reside in motels.¹⁴⁶

Popular destination communities in western North Carolina face similar issues. The average home price in Blowing Rock, for example, is over \$440,000, and the average cost in surrounding Watauga County is \$295,162. Little wonder that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has listed Watauga as being “difficult to live in” for several years. A recent study also found that housing costs were considered a burden to 81% of families in Boone.¹⁴⁷

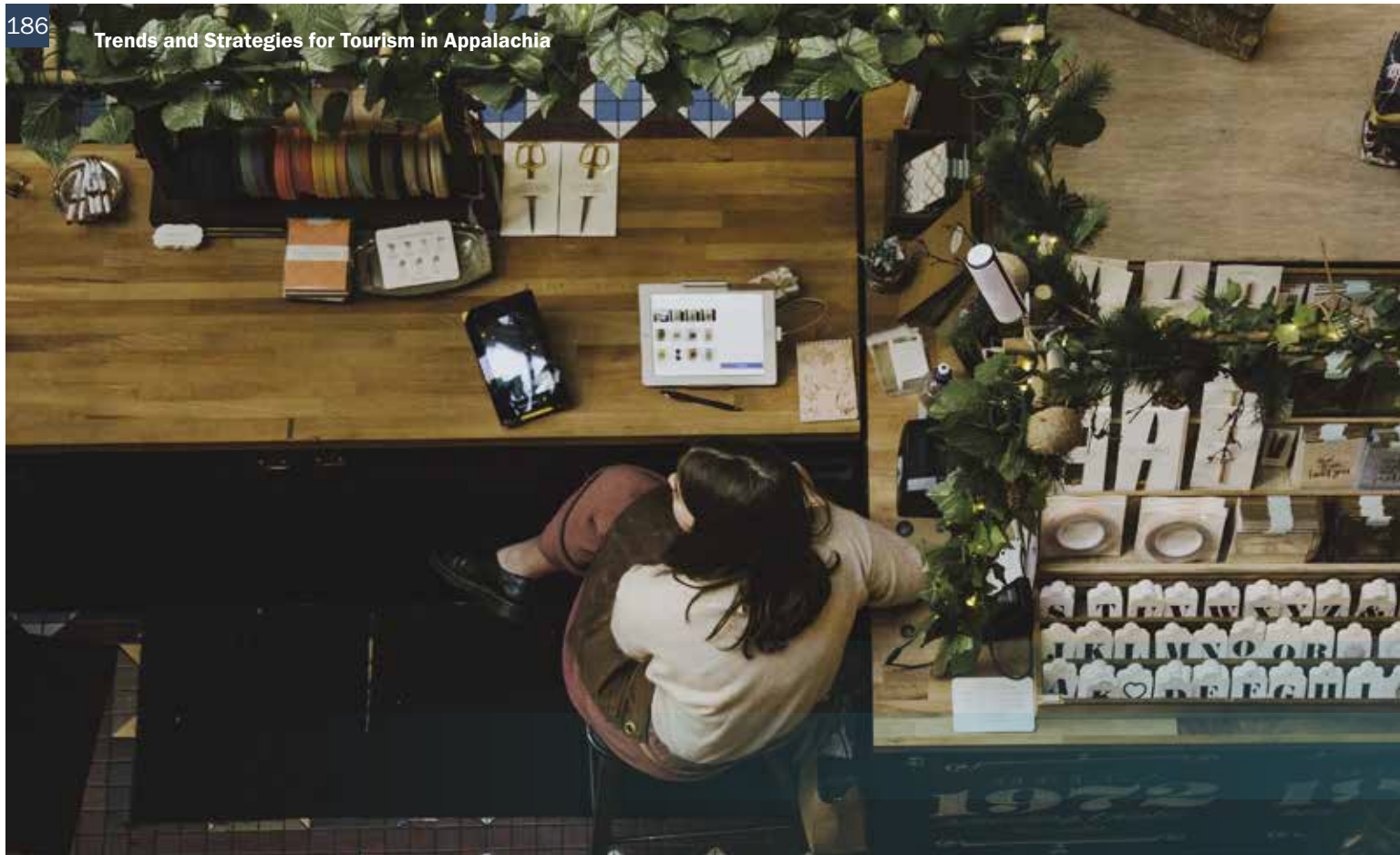
Larger communities can often resolve housing issues through the creation of nonprofit housing authorities. These organizations can help guarantee loans and often use revolving funds and lender relationships to construct affordable homes and housing developments. Asheville's Mountain Housing Opportunities, for example, has constructed 150 homes, renovated and sold another 36 houses, provided purchase assistance to 195 families, and built more than 800 rental apartments in 13 different developments.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Kyle Barron, Edward Kung and Davide Proserpio, “The Effect of Home-Sharing on House Prices and Rents: Evidence from Airbnb,” March 29, 2018, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3006832>.

¹⁴⁶ Daniel Sechtin, “Thousands affected by Sevier County's shortage of available, affordable housing,” WBIR.com, April 26, 2018, <https://www.wbir.com/article/news/local/thousands-affected-by-sevier-countys-shortage-of-available-affordable-housing/51-545714990>.

¹⁴⁷ Watauga County Habitat for Humanity, “About,” <https://wataugahabitat.org/abt>; Appalachian State University Department of Sociology, “Affordable Housing in Watauga County: A Research Report,” 2011 Senior Seminar Research Project, https://lippardcd.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/affordable_housing_research_final_revised1.pdf; Anna Muckinfuss, “Town council will address need for affordable housing in Boone,” *The Appalachian*, April 11, 2019.

¹⁴⁸ Rob Neufeld, “Visiting Our Past: Affordable Housing and Tourism,” Asheville Citizen Times, December 18, 2016; Mountain Housing Opportunities, <https://mtnhousing.org>.



While this approach can work in larger cities, it may not be feasible in small towns with limited resources. In response to these issues, HUD recently highlighted best practices for promoting affordable housing in small rural tourism communities. Using a development in Moab, Utah (population 5,253) as a model, HUD offered the following advice:

- *Plan Proactively:* Creating a housing plan and having needed tools in place can help communities act quickly when opportunities arise.
- *Ask for Help:* Most small communities lack the staff and resources to tackle significant housing issues. They should partner with housing advocates, the private sector, and work with state and federal agencies when developing, building, and managing housing projects.
- *Stress Quality:* Affordable housing need not be luxurious, but it should create a quality environment for vital workers and their families. Safety, energy efficiency, health, and quality of life should be key criteria for the design and development process.
- *Promote Variety:* Different households have different needs at different stages of life. Developments should include a variety of housing units to reflect those needs.

Homes should also include considerations for residents with accessibility issues.¹⁴⁹

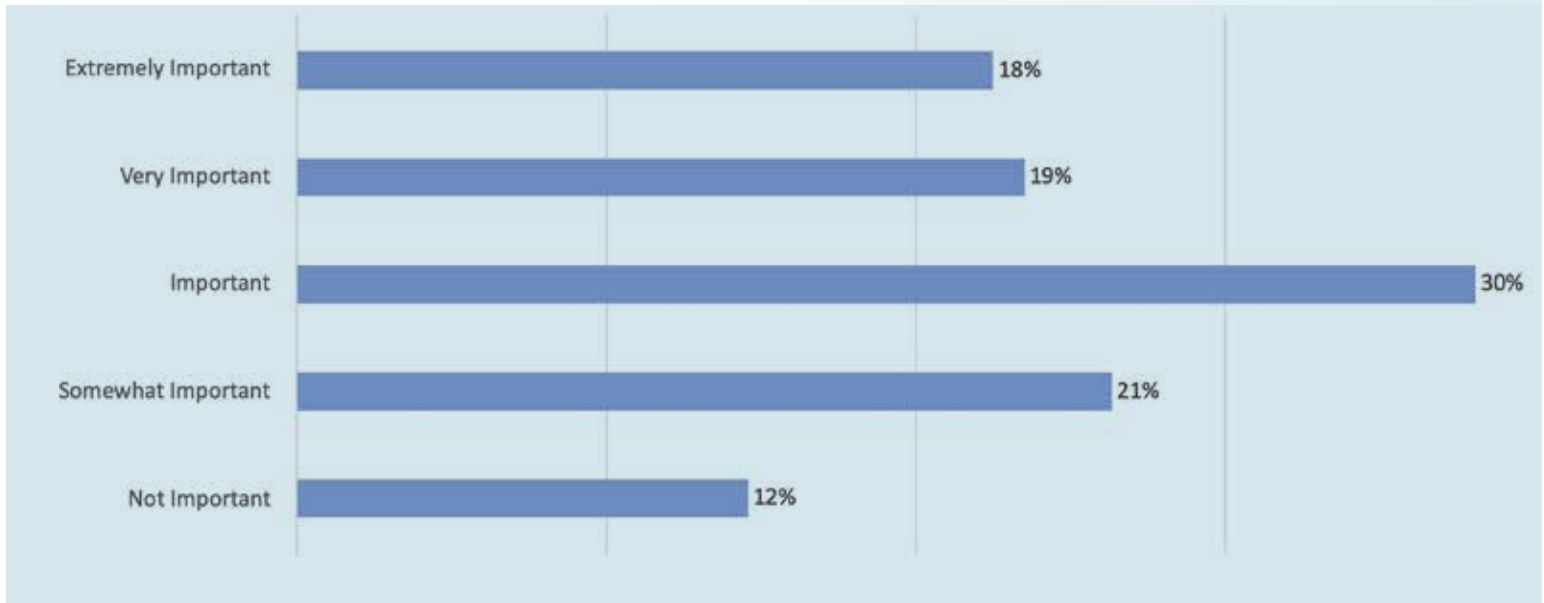
Access to healthcare is also a major concern to both tourism workers and their employers. Hospitality industry workers face numerous health risks. They interact with many people on a daily basis, come in frequent contact with surface contaminants, work long shifts, and maintain irregular hours. Kitchen workers face several unique risks, as they work in an environment with sharp blades, hot stoves, and potentially dangerous commercial appliances. On the flip side, some of these risks also impact visitors, as sick employees can spread illnesses to customers. As it would be in any industry, poor worker health is a threat to tourism's bottom line.

Despite these risks, many workers lack adequate healthcare access. While managers, chefs, and lead cooks are often eligible for employer-based health insurance, many hospitality

¹⁴⁹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Affordable Housing in a Rural Tourism-Based Community," https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr_edge_inpractice_060313.html.

¹⁵⁰ Jonathan Deutsch, "Healthcare: What Options Do Restaurants Have?," *Restaurant Business*, August 2, 2018, <https://www.restaurantbusinessonline.com/advice-guy/healthcare-what-options-do-restaurants-have>; The Aspen Institute, "Reinventing Low Wage Work: Ideas That Can Work For Employees, Employers, and the Economy," <http://www.aspenwsi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Profiles-of-the-Restaurant-Workforce-and-Restaurant-Opportunities-Centers-United.pdf>.

f12.12 Importance of healthcare access for tourism growth, according to stakeholders



workers, such as waitstaff, bartenders, housekeepers, and dishwashers, are not. According to one industry study, almost 90% of workers in the restaurant industry lack affordable health coverage.¹⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, Appalachian stakeholders appear to be concerned about the health of their workforce. Almost 70% of stakeholders considered healthcare access as “important” or higher when it comes to growing tourism.

Of course, the tourism industry is incapable of reforming the Region’s healthcare system. A few large destinations, however, are trying to address their workers’ health needs. Tennessee’s Dollywood Theme Park operates a Family Health Care Center. This facility provides a number of low-cost services to employees and their dependents, including routine exams and care, x-rays, lab services, and fitness programs. Likewise, Asheville’s Biltmore Estate operates a free on-site health clinic for workers, as well as free health and wellness screenings.¹⁵¹

However, with limited resources and thin margins, most businesses can merely direct their workforce to available community resources, such as walk-in clinics, low-cost or public insurance, and community health services. Nevertheless, many communities and business are adopting

wellness programs to help reduce health issues.

These programs range from simple kitchen safety training to comprehensive health and fitness opportunities. The best of these are, not surprisingly, offered by large hospitality corporations. Marriott Corporation, for example, offers its workers stress management, exercise and fitness, nutrition and weight management, smoking cessation, and financial wellbeing services. Westin hotels provides specially designed New Balance shoes with arch support and shock absorption to its housekeeping staff, and its employee cafeterias feature healthy menu items. The fast-casual restaurant chains Qdoba and Noodles & Company provide financial incentives to workers who participate in wellness or fitness programs.¹⁵²

While programs like this are beyond the means of most Appalachian small businesses, tourism stakeholders can partner with local officials and other enterprises to implement community-based wellness programs. A good example can be found in Brownsville, Tennessee, a small rural community in an economically distressed Delta county. Faced with increasing health issues and declining access to services, local officials in Brownsville launched “Healthy Moves,”

¹⁵¹ Dollywood Corporation, “Work Camper Guide,” file:///C:/Users/Tim%20Ezzell/Desktop/WorkCamperGuide.pdf; Biltmore Estate, “Benefits,” <https://www.biltmore.com/careers/benefits>.

¹⁵² Tingting Zhang, “Employee Wellness Innovations in Hospitality Workplaces: Learning From High-Tech Corporations,” *Journal of Global Business Insights*, 3(2), 52-66.

A diverse traveling public would be benefitted by a more diverse tourism workforce, particularly in visible and leadership positions. Appalachian communities should take steps to encourage participation in the workforce among all local residents.



f12.13

Fitness signs, such as this one in front of the Brownsville, Tennessee, courthouse, are a low-cost way to promote wellness in small communities.

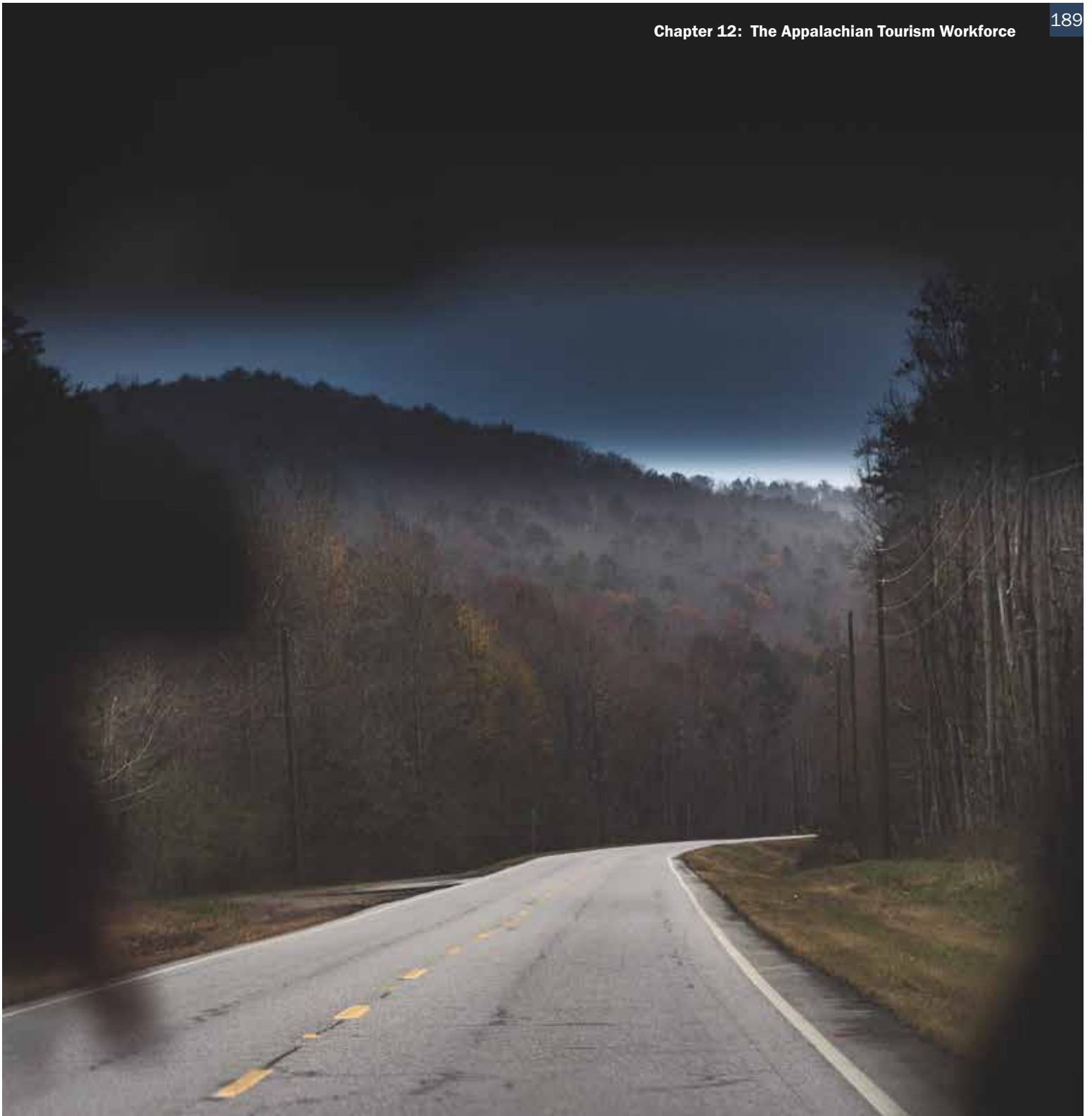
a comprehensive wellness and fitness program for their community. The program includes fitness classes and free health screenings, often conducted at local churches. It also includes visible and accessible wellness amenities, such as improved walking paths, fitness signage, fitness equipment at public spaces, and a new playground to encourage active play for youth. Many of these improvements not only helped local residents, they also created improved experiences for visitors.¹⁵³

Analysis

As indicated in Chapter 4, Appalachian tourism employs over 577,000 workers across the Region. These workers rival the Region's natural assets as Appalachia's greatest tourism resource. Yet, despite their skills and strengths, today's workforce faces multiple challenges. Among these are the following:

- While hospitality worker training programs have increased in both number and quality over recent years, additional training is needed in many areas for entry-level employees. Expanded use of community-based programs, such as Jamestown's Ambassador Program, would be helpful.
- A diverse traveling public would be benefitted by a more diverse tourism workforce, particularly in visible and leadership positions. Appalachian communities should take steps to encourage participation in the workforce among all local residents.
- The opioid crisis has had a significant impact on the tourism workforce in some areas. Tourism leaders should adopt industry-specific programs and strategies to help alleviate the effects of addiction, while also creating career opportunities for those in recovery.
- Successful tourism communities incorporate worker needs into their tourism and community plans. Adequate housing and healthcare access are vital to the creation of a stable and successful workforce.

¹⁵³ City of Brownsville, Tennessee, "'Healthy Moves' Health and Wellness Initiative," <http://brownsvilletn.gov/event/healthy-moves-health-and-wellness-initiative/>.



Successful tourism communities incorporate worker needs into their tourism and community plans. Adequate housing and healthcare access are vital to the creation of a stable and successful workforce.

Case Study: Jamestown, New York

“We’re continuing as a community to learn how to say it,” one local official noted, before attempting the word in question: “App-uh-latch-uh.”

Laughing, many stakeholders in the room agreed that Appalachian identity is not necessarily strong among many residents in southwestern New York. Still, they expressed gratitude for being included in the Region. “The need Senator Kennedy saw, to tackle poverty in these 10–12 southern New York counties back in the 1960s,” another official noted, “still exists today.”



Historic and well-maintained facades line the streets of downtown Jamestown.

Jamestown, New York is the seat of Chautauqua County, which sits at the northern edge of the Appalachian Region. It is located hundreds of miles from the hills of Kentucky and West Virginia, yet while the landscape may be different, these northern areas face some of the same challenges as the central and southern parts of the Region. Economic transitions, changing demographics, and changing attitudes can be just as challenging in rural New York as anywhere else. Jamestown's success in addressing these issues is notable, and the town can serve as a model for other communities.

From Furniture to the Funny Business

Jamestown was once known as the “Furniture Capital of the World.” The community housed multiple furniture manufacturers and even a downtown Furniture Exposition Building, which displayed local wares and even hosted an annual Furniture Mart Expo until 1982. The town hosted other manufacturers, as well, and it was also the birthplace of the crescent wrench and voting machine.¹⁵⁴

The area is no stranger to tourism, with Jamestown being just minutes from Chautauqua Lake, a well-established tourist attraction, and only about 15 miles from the historic resort town of Chautauqua, home to the famous Chautauqua Institution. The Institution was once considered to be the epicenter of educational reform in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In its heyday, the venue attracted

Jamestown, New York

“Jamestown is a small market with big market deliverables.”
– Local Official



COUNTY FACTS

County	Chautauqua
Population (2017) ¹	129,046
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$27,562
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	6.0%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	18.5%
ARC status (2020) ²	Transitional

CITY FACTS

Founded (Jamestown) ³	1827
Miles to interstate (I-86) ⁴	3
Miles to state capitol (Albany, NY) ⁴	357
Miles to nearest metro area (Erie, PA) ⁴	43
Miles to nearest commercial airport (Erie International Airport) ⁴	59

SOURCES

¹ “The Appalachian Region.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² “Socioeconomic Data.” Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ “The Pearl City.” Accessed at <http://www.jamestownny.net/community-history/the-pearl-city/>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

¹⁵⁴ City of Jamestown, New York, “Jamestown Furniture Exposition Building,” <http://www.jamestownny.net/departments/parks-and-recreation/historical-marker-program/jamestown-furniture-exposition-building/>.

thousands of visitors every year for programs in the arts, education, religion, and music.

The late twentieth century presented serious economic challenges to Jamestown. Global competition and a changing economy led to the demise of many established industries. The city's historic downtown began to decline and many local businesses either closed or moved elsewhere. Currently, manufacturing comprises about one-fifth of the local economy.

But the community eventually received some help from an old friend. Lucille Ball, a Jamestown native, returned to the area in the 1980s. She looked to her hometown to house her comedic legacy, and also as a place to document, preserve, and promote the American comedic craft. In 1996, after Ball's death, the Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum opened in downtown Jamestown, and an annual comedy festival followed. In 2018, Ball's ultimate vision was realized with the opening of the National Comedy Center, a state-of-the-art museum and performance complex in downtown Jamestown.¹⁵⁵

A Downtown Renaissance

Tourism now makes up a significant portion of Jamestown's economy. Much of that growth depended on the creation of a revitalized downtown. In 2006, the city teamed with state and local foundations to develop a downtown urban design plan. The goal of the plan was to create a "new vision" for a "strong and healthy" downtown area. This plan was followed by a streetscape plan and an economic development strategy.¹⁵⁶

A new organization, the Jamestown Renaissance Corporation, was established to help city officials implement the urban design plan. This nonprofit organization, created by the local Gebbie Foundation, has since helped the city undertake a number of downtown improvement projects. These include the transformation of vacant lots into small parks, the renovation of empty buildings, façade improvements, and the creation of a downtown public market.¹⁵⁷

The progress has been visible and significant. Public art now adorns local buildings, displays or graphics fill the windows



Lucille Ball helped Jamestown become a hub for the comedic arts.



Community engagement is part of Jamestown's planning process. This model is used to engage local youth in planning activities.



The National Comedy Center is the centerpiece of Jamestown's revitalized downtown.



Signs like this one, in the window of a newly renovated building, help convey a sense of progress.

¹⁵⁵ Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum, <http://www.lucy-desi.com>.

¹⁵⁶ Goody Clancy, et al., "Jamestown Urban Design Plan," December 2006, <http://www.jamestownny.net/departments/department-of-development/planning/jamestown-studies-plans-documents/>.

¹⁵⁷ Jamestown Renaissance Corporation, <http://jamestownrenaissance.org>.



of empty storefronts, a new hotel is now open downtown, and the local housing stock is being improved.

The centerpiece of the revitalized downtown is the National Comedy Center. Opened in August 2018, the center was named a “Best New Attraction” by USA Today and one of Time’s “World’s Greatest Places.” The center is notable for its use of interactive technologies to help engage visitors in the comedy experience. It also hosts a regular series of performances by world-class comics.¹⁵⁸

Challenges Remain

Jamestown recently revised the 2006 downtown plan. New ideas, such as improving riverfront access, are emerging, but securing implementation funds is always a challenge. The community is grateful for the help of the local development district, Southern Tier West, but feels the application and administrative processes can sometimes be cumbersome. While local officials demonstrate good skills and capacity, they express a desire for mentoring from experienced stakeholders and other leaders.

The success of the comedy center has attracted a steady stream of new visitors. The number of tourists has increased, and so too has the diversity. Local leaders have worked

to quickly to resolve any issues, and the Renaissance Corporation has also helped address the problem through its Ambassador training program (see Chapter 12).

Lessons Learned

Jamestown provides several important lessons for communities trying to grow their tourism and revive their downtown areas. These include the following:

- Planning was the centerpiece of Jamestown’s downtown revival. It is notable that Jamestown not only created the plan, but they also then remained committed to its implementation.
- Partnerships also played a vital role in the city’s recovery. Local foundations, especially the Gebbie Foundation, played an important role. Foundations can be critical allies in creating and implementing a vision.
- While Jamestown built a new future, it recognized and celebrated its past. Historical places and figures, such as Lucille Ball, provide a foundation for growth.
- As seen elsewhere, aesthetics matter. Jamestown invested in public art, cleaned up neglected spaces, and filled empty storefronts to create an environment that feels vibrant, safe, and welcoming.

¹⁵⁸ National Comedy Center, “About the National Comedy Center,” <https://comedycenter.org/about/>.

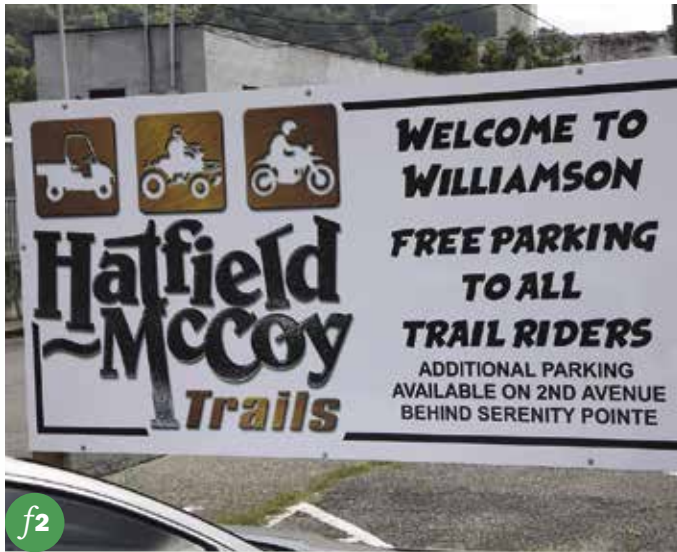
Case Study: Williamson, West Virginia

Williamson, West Virginia, is a community in recovery. Like many families in Southern West Virginia, the historic town has been hard hit by two recent and connected phenomena: the collapse of the Appalachian coal industry and the nation's opioid epidemic. Yet, like many Appalachian families, the community has responded with resilience, optimism, and innovation. In the process, it has become a model for other Appalachian communities facing difficult transitions.

**f1**

Williamson's historic "Coal House" is an important reminder of the community's historic mining heritage. Today the building serves as a visitors' center.

**"Our wealth was in the ground and now we realize it is in our people."
– Local Official**



Williamson provides free parking to ATV enthusiasts.

A Legacy of Resilience

Williamson and its residents have an innate grit and toughness that is rooted in the community's past. In the last century, the town endured strikes, labor violence, and periodic and often devastating floods. Flood walls, built in the 1980s, held back the Tug River. No wall, however, could prepare Williamson for the deluge of economic decline and substance abuse that struck in the past two decades.

Mingo County, once a titan of West Virginia's Coal Country, experienced unprecedented job losses as local coal production fell by almost half in just 10 years. At the same time, the county also experienced the ravages of the opioid crises at a level almost unseen elsewhere. In recent years, Williamson has, in fact, seen itself portrayed as the face of the crisis and been highlighted repeatedly in national media outlets.¹⁵⁹

Building Back, Using Local Assets

Tourism emerged early on as an important element in Williamson's recovery plan. Building on its coal legacy and the local history of the famous Hatfield-McCoy feud, local officials embarked on an effort to transform the area into the ATV capital of Appalachia. Working with a vast network of extant mining roads, local leaders created over 700 miles of ATV trails across southern West Virginia. These trails, built

Williamson, West Virginia

"We have had to be more resilient than most communities have had to be."

– Local Official



COUNTY FACTS

County	Mingo
Population (2017) ¹	24,197
Per capita market income (2017) ²	\$16,545
Three-year average unemployment rate (2015-2017) ²	11.5%
Poverty rate (2013-2017) ²	28.9%
ARC status (2020) ²	Distressed

CITY FACTS

Founded (Williamson) ³	1894
Miles to interstate (I-64) ⁴	70
Miles to state capitol (Charleston, WV) ⁴	82
Miles to nearest metro area (Erie, PA) ⁴	52
Miles to nearest commercial airport (Yeager Airport, Charleston) ⁴	71

SOURCES

¹ "The Appalachian Region." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=159

² "Socioeconomic Data." Accessed at https://www.arc.gov/reports/socio_report.asp

³ "History of Williamson." Accessed at <http://www.cityofwilliamson.org/history-of-city-hall.html>

⁴ Accessed at <https://www.mapquest.com>

¹⁵⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior, "Natural Resources Revenue Data: Boone, Logan, and Mingo Counties, West Virginia," <https://revenue.data.doi.gov/case-studies/boone-logan-and-mingo/>; News outlets discussing Williamson included NBC, *The Washington Post*, Reuters, NPR, and *The Economist*.

with other counties and state and private sector partners, have helped transform and sustain Williamson during the current transition.

Williamson helped trail development by providing important services and amenities to riders. ATV riders in Williamson, for example, can legally ride from trailheads to local businesses on city streets. They enjoy free parking in the city and have access to restaurants and a historic downtown hotel. Trail permits and local information are available in the visitors' center, and a new downtown campground is in development.

The impact of the trails has been dramatic. Counties with trails reported a 44% increase in restaurant sales and 45% growth in lodging revenues. The overall number of establishments also increased by over 4%, and trail counties even experienced growth during the recession of 2007–2009.¹⁶⁰

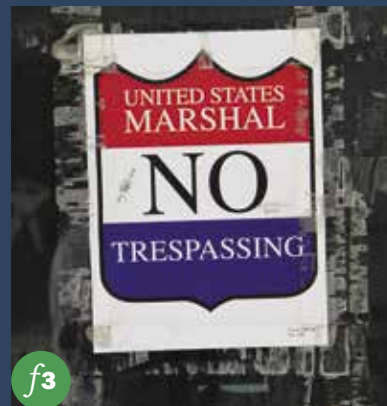
Local support, both from the public and local officials, has also played a critical role. One visitor noted the helpfulness of local residents: "I thought folks would be hillbillies, and they are, but in a very good way," adding, "These are some of the friendliest people I have ever met".

Challenges Remain

At the height of the opioid crisis, "pill mills" thrived in Williamson and lines of customers—many from other places—spilled out into the streets. The offending clinics and pharmacies have since been closed by authorities, but the stigma created by that brief period remains strong. "People envision our town with zombies in the street," one official lamented, adding "People are afraid to come to our town due to the fear of being robbed or assaulted."

The opioid crisis also exacerbated problems with the community's downtown and overall built environment. While the main street of Williamson is pleasant and well-maintained, side streets and other areas show signs of decay. Empty storefronts, vacant houses, overgrown lots, and dilapidated structures contribute to a sense of decline and unease.

Community leaders need assistance, both technical and monetary, to help address these issues. Competition for scarce resources, however, sometimes leads to



f3

Williamson's "pill mills" are now closed, but their legacy still casts a heavy shadow over the community.



f4

Vacant buildings and empty storefronts contribute to an image of neglect and malaise.



f5

While ATVs, such as these parked outside of a local restaurant, are helping small business, help is needed in creating new establishments.



f6

Despite many problems, hope grows in Williamson.

¹⁶⁰ Elizabeth Perdue, et. al, "The Economic Impact of the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System in West Virginia," 13-15.



disagreements related to funding priorities or strategies to move forward. Increased cooperation and open communications help reduce these conflicts.

Williamson's leaders have ambitious goals for their community. They envision a broader tourism market, with additional heritage and outdoor activities. Leaders would also like to see more dining and lodging options. Low levels of entrepreneurship and access to business services and capital, however, impede business development.

They also wisely view tourism as one part of a large recovery strategy. "Williamson was once the center of commerce in the region," one leader stated. He added, "We need a mixed and diverse approach to regain that status once again. Tourism is a big part of that mix and a catalyst for other development." Workforce issues are seen as a barrier to this vision. "We need to train our future workforce so that they are ready for a diversified economy in our community, but we need capital for this."

Lessons Learned

Williamson's experience offers many lessons for Appalachian communities hit hard by the decline in coal production and the opioid epidemic. Important lessons from Williamson include the following:

- Williamson's asset-based approach helped them leverage existing resources to create a tourism destination.
- Partnership with other communities, the private sector, and state government played an important and essential role in the transformation.
- Overcoming a stigma is difficult and takes investment, vision, and—most of all—time.
- Improved codes enforcement could help Williamson create a better image for visitors.
- Public support and support from elected officials contribute to successful outcomes.

13 Measuring Tourism's Success

While developing and maintaining a successful tourism destination—or industry—may be challenging, measuring its impacts can be even harder. Communities, regions, and even countries struggle to define and assess the impact of their tourism industries. In Appalachia, efforts to measure and report tourism vary widely. As a result, there are few comparable measures available across the 13 states in the Region. This lack of consistency makes it difficult to evaluate efforts and accurately gauge success.

Much of the problem lies in the very nature of tourism. It is an activity that, almost by definition, is casual and ill-defined. It consists of recreational travel, but how exactly is

that defined? Is the family from North Georgia on a day trip to Chattanooga less of a tourist than the family from Utah? How does one categorize the business traveler who stops at the museum, or the service member going home on leave? Is a trip for a family wedding considered a vacation? If so, does the same apply to a funeral?

As noted, people travel for many reasons, and often the line between leisure and obligation is unclear. Travel for recreation and travel for work, family, and healthcare can be intertwined, which makes distinguishing tourist from traveler neither clear nor easy. Some communities attempt to distinguish between recreational and other sorts of travel using specific local metrics, such as boat ramp counts or the number of lift tickets sold. These efforts can be useful at the local level, particularly in areas where tourism is defined primarily by a single destination or activity.

These community-specific approaches do not work everywhere, and since many would not produce comparable statistics, they're generally not scalable to a regional, state, or national level. For this reason, most areas choose to measure travel rather than tourism. Travel includes tourism, but it also includes other types of trips. While imperfect in this respect, it is much easier to define, discern, and measure. For this reason, it has become the standard for comparable industry statistics.

Assessment Approaches in Appalachia

While all 13 Appalachian states measure travel extensively, not only is there little comparability across states, there



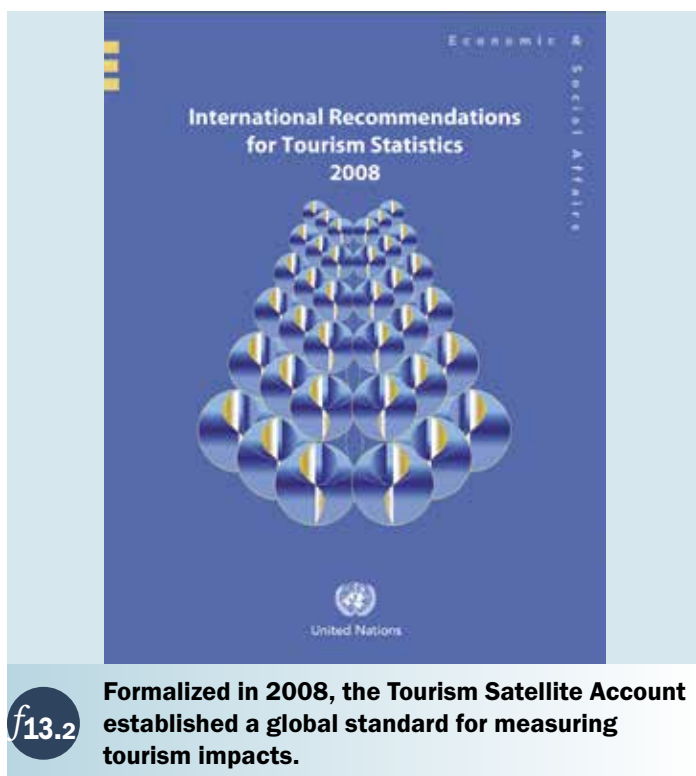
f13.1

While turnstiles can count people, they cannot measure experiences, impacts, or satisfaction.

Photo Courtesy Wikipedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turnstiles_in_Alewife_station,_August_2005.jpg



Communities, regions, and even countries struggle to define and assess the impact of their tourism industries. In Appalachia, efforts to measure and report tourism vary widely.



is also little consistency within states. In several states, from one analysis to the next, they may have used different approaches to measure different things. While some states collect and analyze their data in-house, most rely on tourism consulting firms, many of which utilize their own approaches and methodologies. As such, findings often are not comparable across differing firms. Also, many of these firms tend to be located outside of Appalachia, and they generally do not visit sites within the Region to validate their findings in the field.¹⁶¹

While details of these proprietary models are generally regarded as trade secrets, disclosures of data collected show significant differences. One firm, for example, includes “real estate” among tourism industries, a move one expert critic called “inexplicable.” Others add some state government spending to visitor spending estimates, and others have included spending related to durable manufacturing, wholesale sales, or even mining.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ This assessment is based on an evaluation of publicly available tourism reports and those granted upon request. It also reflects comments made by local and state tourism industry stakeholders made in surveys, interviews, and during project site visits.

¹⁶² Douglas C. Frechtling, “Misappropriation of the TSA Brand: The Case of State level ‘Tourism Satellite Accounts’ Published in the United States,” Presented to the Eleventh Meeting of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA, Madrid, Spain, March 2010, 2.

States also exhibit significant differences when reporting tourism data. Many report only two common statistics in their tourism reports: expenditures and direct employment. Again, while all 13 states report these categories, they may have been collected in different ways and include different components. As such, even though they fall under the same broad category, the numbers reported by each state may represent very different things. It should also be noted that one state, Alabama, does not report any data from counties with a single lodging establishment or fewer. As a result, some Alabama counties show no information. These are generally small rural counties, areas that are typically of high interest to agencies such as ARC. Table 13.1 shows reporting categories among the 13 ARC states. Note the differences in reported categories, especially among tax revenues.

























































This table also shows differences in the level of public access to information. Most states should be commended for the level of transparency they employ in reporting state- and county-level tourism data. Others are less forthcoming; New York, for example, leave county-level reporting to regional tourism bureaus. While some of these post full county-level reports every year, others share little. Georgia stands out for restricting public access to all county-level tourism data. Annual reports with county-level data are kept behind a firewall, and the public must seek permission for access to the material. The justification for this restriction is to prevent data from being misused, but the lack of transparency is notable.

This variation in reporting approaches and standards results in a lack of comparability for researchers and policymakers, and also a lack of confidence in the reported statistics. Some officials believe that impact figures are often inflated, especially in smaller communities. For example, tourism-related impacts of millions of dollars in small rural counties with few residents and even fewer attractions appear in some datasets. Meanwhile, others believe their tourism activities are underreported, and that the number of visitors they encounter is not fully counted.

Tourism Satellite Account

As stated earlier, problems measuring and reporting tourism are not unique to Appalachia. Agencies around the globe face similar issues. In the 1990s, officials at the United Nations World Tourism Organization worked to develop a global

Table 13.1: Travel Data Reporting in Appalachian States

	Expenditures	Direct Earnings or Payroll	Direct Employment	State Tax Revenue	Local Tax Revenue	State and Local Tax Revenue	Restricted Access to Information
Alabama ¹⁶³							
Georgia							
Kentucky							
Maryland							
Mississippi							
New York ¹⁶⁴							
North Carolina							
Ohio							
Pennsylvania							
South Carolina							
Tennessee							
Virginia							
West Virginia							

¹⁶³ Alabama only lists direct and indirect earnings. Alabama does not report data from counties with a single lodging establishment or fewer. As a result, some Alabama counties show no information. In addition, Alabama only reports hotel tax revenues at the county level.

¹⁶⁴ While New York doesn't restrict information, it does not seem to have a standard for sharing county-level data. This data is reported by regional tourism organizations and there is no common standard for access. Some report a full range of county-level metrics, while others report almost nothing.

The Tourism Satellite Account approach represents an opportunity to increase knowledge and understanding of tourism and its impacts.

standard for measuring tourism impacts. The result of these efforts, released in 2000 and finalized in 2008, is the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA).

Satellite accounts are tools developed and used by economists to measure the impact of industries that are not easily defined, like tourism. The TSA established a framework to measure these impacts. Because it creates a universal standard, it allows for accurate comparisons across countries and regions. Increasingly, this approach is also being adopted at the state level in the United States.

The TSA allows researchers to measure a number of important factors, such as the following:

- Tourism's contribution to overall GDP
- Tourism's ranking compared to other economic sectors
- The number of jobs created by tourism
- Levels of tourism investment
- Tax revenues from tourism
- Tourism consumption
- Workforce characteristics

In short, the TSA approach creates a richer and more detailed picture of tourism in an area and shows how it compares

to other industries within that area, as well as to tourism in other areas. Due to these advantages, many states and jurisdictions are now using the TSA approach to measure and report tourism impacts. These efforts have been met with a positive response from the tourism industry, with the use of TSA standards becoming more commonplace.¹⁶⁵

However, this transition has not been without difficulties. Some states and their consultants are creating TSA-branded data that do not fully conform to established guidelines or employ recognized methodologies. These efforts have served to undermine the main strength of the TSA approach: comparability.¹⁶⁶ However, while the TSA approach may at times be problematic, it also represents an opportunity to increase knowledge and understanding of tourism and its impacts.

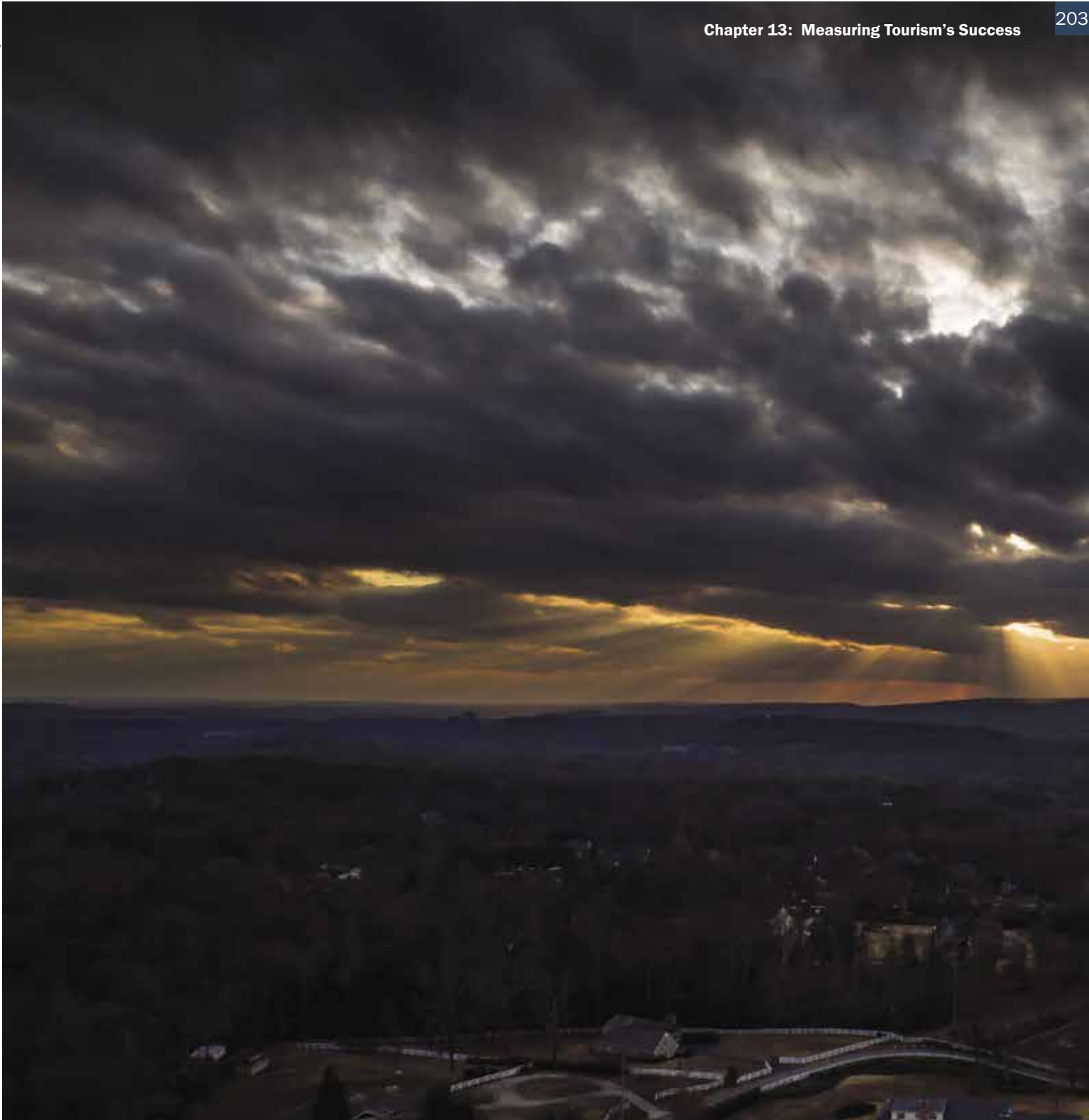
A Note About Local Project Assessments

While the TSA approach can be an effective tool in evaluating macro-level tourism, it is not well suited for small communities and individual projects. In these cases, evaluators should continue to rely on traditional performance measures such as visitation, lodging tax revenues, targeted expenditures, employment, and traffic counts. Still, however, these figures alone do not always fully convey the complex impacts of individual or small-scale efforts—and this may be especially true in small communities.

For these reasons, evaluators should also consider incorporating qualitative data into local or project-based assessments. Site visits, interviews, and narrative surveys can help discern additional impacts that may be difficult or impossible to enumerate. These might include factors such as quality of life improvements; improvements in recruiting new industries or new residents; increased local pride; and an increased awareness of downtown resources.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations World Tourism Organization, "Basic Concepts of the Tourism Satellite Account," <http://statistics.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/concepts.pdf>; Douglas C. Frechtling, "The Tourism Satellite Account, A Primer," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 136–153, 2010.

¹⁶⁶ Douglas C. Frechtling, "Misappropriation of the TSA Brand: The Case of State level 'Tourism Satellite Accounts' Published in the United States," Presented to the Eleventh Meeting of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA, Madrid, Spain, March 2010.



Evaluators should continue to rely on traditional performance measures such as attendance, lodging tax revenues, targeted expenditures, employment, and traffic counts.

14 Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion: Tourism activities are unevenly distributed across Appalachia. Most tourism occurs in a relatively small number of counties, even though many more could enjoy its benefits.

Recommendation: Regional stakeholders and agencies should work to redefine tourism and create a new tourism narrative for Appalachia.

While small amounts of tourism may not have a large economic impact, the indirect benefits can be profound.

Many times, tourism is mistakenly seen as a panacea for a community's economic ills. In reality, while tourism can bring significant benefits to a community, it is also an industry with limitations—like any other. It is highly competitive, requiring significant investments in infrastructure, marketing, and education. While it creates employment opportunities, the jobs are often service-related and seasonal.

Yet, despite these shortcomings, tourism—even in small amounts—is still very important. While small amounts of tourism may not have a large economic impact, the indirect benefits can be profound. These can include the following:

- *Increased ability to recruit new investments and new residents:* Tourism, even at modest levels, can provide a “tipping point” that allows certain types of amenities to exist at profitable levels. These businesses can include specialty shops, white-tablecloth dining establishments, and lodging venues. All of these amenities contribute to revitalized downtowns and can help recruit new industries and new families.
- *Improved quality of life:* These same amenities can greatly enhance the quality of life for the existing population. New and improved opportunities for dining, recreation, and leisure can help retain residents and provide positive activities for local youth.
- *Increased local pride:* Notable amenities and improvements can increase local pride in the community and help rural towns claim a new identity.
- *Increased entrepreneurship:* Tourism, even at a small scale, can create viable small business opportunities for local residents.

The costs and benefits of tourism are not always well-communicated or well-understood. While the industry may seem simple and lucrative, it often requires complex investments, and its gains are not always clear. State regional and local leaders should promote a new tourism narrative that defines challenges, sets realistic expectations, and stresses both the direct and indirect benefits of tourism.



State regional and local leaders should promote a new tourism narrative that defines challenges, sets realistic expectations, and stresses both the direct and indirect benefits of tourism.



Stem List / Unsplash.com

Conclusion: Many public officials do not fully understand tourism—its costs, its benefits, its practices, and its limitations.

Recommendation: Develop learning opportunities for local officials throughout the Region, including one-day workshops.

A frequent complaint among tourism stakeholders was that local officials did not understand tourism. Specific issues included a lack of understanding about costs, unrealistic expectations about benefits, and a lack of awareness of the need for marketing and planning assistance. The complex nature of tourism, and its relationship to other local needs (i.e., housing, codes enforcement, and healthcare) was also not well understood.

To help fix this lack of understanding, learning opportunities should be made available to officials throughout the Region. For example, one-day workshops designed for local officials would introduce them to basic concepts related to tourism. These could include marketing, social media use, authenticity, planning, and infrastructure. The sessions could also include detailed discussions related to costs, as well as a review of relatable case studies. These workshops could be led by state tourism officials and other tourism experts.

Conclusion: Many small rural Appalachian communities lack the capacity and the resources to create effective tourism and tourism marketing plans.

Recommendation: Create and implement hands-on community training programs that also include peer mentoring aspects, similar to Colorado's CRAFT program.

States like Oregon, Utah, and Colorado have areas similar to those found throughout Appalachia: rural and sometimes isolated communities that have been impacted by economic transitions, some of which involve declines in resource-based industries (e.g., timber production and mining).

These states have succeeded in helping many of their communities develop competitive tourism economies. Much of the success is due to training programs like Colorado's CRAFT program, which engages a wide range of local stakeholders in community-based training workshops. These workshops take place in the participating communities, include direct instruction by relevant experts, and usually involve assistance from peer mentors, who provide direct assistance to participants while they develop their skills. Communities that complete the program are usually eligible for small grants to help them use new skills for implementation projects.

The CRAFT program should serve as a model for states throughout Appalachia.



Fincas Anton / Unsplash.com

Conclusion: Some communities in Appalachia may not be prepared to accommodate diverse visitors.

Recommendation: Conduct diversity training for tourism workers and officials and discourage language and signage that could potentially be divisive. Industry officials should encourage diversity in the workforce.

Travel by underrepresented groups is a fast-growing segment of the tourism industry, and destinations should be prepared to accommodate a diverse traveling public. To help capitalize on this potential market—and to make all travelers

feel welcome and comfortable—diversity training among tourism workers and officials may be appropriate in some communities. Communities seen as unwelcoming to some will likely be seen as unwelcoming to all.

The lack of diversity within the Appalachian tourism industry may also contribute to possible negative perceptions of the Region. Tourism industry leaders should work to expand diversity in the industry, especially at management and leadership levels.

Conclusion: Entry-level and front-line tourism workers sometimes lack hospitality training or effective knowledge of local destinations and resources.

Recommendation: Communities across Appalachia should create local ambassador programs similar to the Jamestown Ambassador Program in New York.

Small business owners and workers are critical points of contact for visitors. In many cases, however, they may lack hospitality training. They may also not be fully aware of local destinations, activities, and visitor resources. In New York, Jamestown created its Ambassador Program to improve hospitality skills, as well as awareness of local resources, among its business owners and workers. Businesses that participate in the program receive special signage and recognition, and program participants receive free admission to local attractions.

Jamestown's program consists of an online session that addresses topics such as local history, local attractions, customer service skills, and embracing diversity. Other communities should adopt similar programs, which could be developed and implemented at minimal cost.

Conclusion: The Passenger Vessel Services Act is an old law that may unduly and unnecessarily restrict river tourism in Appalachia.

Recommendation: Revisit the Passenger Vessel Services Act, and potentially amend or revise it to better accommodate modern river passenger travel and tourism.

It is currently less expensive for Americans to cruise on the Danube in Europe than on the Ohio or Tennessee rivers. The main reason for this may be due to the Passenger Vessel Services Act, legislation created in 1886 that requires that vessels operating between U.S. ports be constructed in the United States, owned by Americans, and carry an American crew.

Emmy Gaddy / Unsplash.com



The legislation predates the modern river cruise industry, and it keeps major river cruise lines from operating in Appalachian waterways. Sadly, this is taking place at a time when global demand for river cruises is at an all-time high. However, passenger river landings in Appalachia sit empty while similar ports in Europe are often overwhelmed with visitors.

This is a significant lost opportunity for many communities in central and southern Appalachia. As such, the Passenger Vessel Services Act should be reviewed.

Conclusion: Many small rural communities lack the capacity to adequately enforce local codes. This leads to a degraded built environment while also contributing to public nuisances, crime perception, and poor aesthetics. These issues, in turn, negatively impact tourism development.

Recommendation: Communities in rural areas should invest in shared codes enforcement services.

Small communities often lack the capacity or resources for robust codes enforcement. This lack of enforcement then leads to a host of issues, including empty storefronts, abandoned buildings, fire and safety hazards, and public nuisances. Faced with these issues, some communities in the western United States have begun sharing codes enforcement

services. Appalachian communities should consider this effective collaborative approach.

Conclusion: Prospective Appalachian entrepreneurs sometimes lack the skills, resources, confidence, and connections to be successful in creating small tourism businesses.

Recommendation: Communities in Appalachia should encourage business development using hands-on coaching approaches, such as enterprise facilitation.

Many residents throughout Appalachia, having witnessed local failures, may be reluctant to start businesses themselves. Providing coaching, skills development, and mentoring may be an effective way of overcoming this hesitance. Approaches like enterprise facilitation are effective tools in assisting business development. They also help establish lasting networks, which can then lead to improved business and lending relationships.

Conclusion: Many Appalachian communities lack effective planning or land use controls. When plans do exist, they are often not well integrated with tourism plans.

Recommendation: Communities interested in developing tourism should integrate tourism considerations in their comprehensive planning process. Community planning staff should play a role in developing tourism plans.

Many smaller communities lack comprehensive plans or land use controls, such as zoning. Where these plans do exist, they are often not well-coordinated with local tourism plans. Likewise, while many local tourism plans take activities like marketing or signage into consideration, they are sometimes created apart from other community planning processes.

Tourism, however, is an activity that often impacts multiple areas of a community's infrastructure and environment. Housing, transportation, and utilities, for example, play an important role in many tourism projects. As such, communities should take care to coordinate tourism planning with other planning activities and include planning staff in tourism development efforts.

Conclusion: The most important characteristic sought by modern tourists is authenticity.

Recommendation: Communities should make authentic experiences the center of their development efforts. To do so, they must recognize and leverage their local tourism assets.

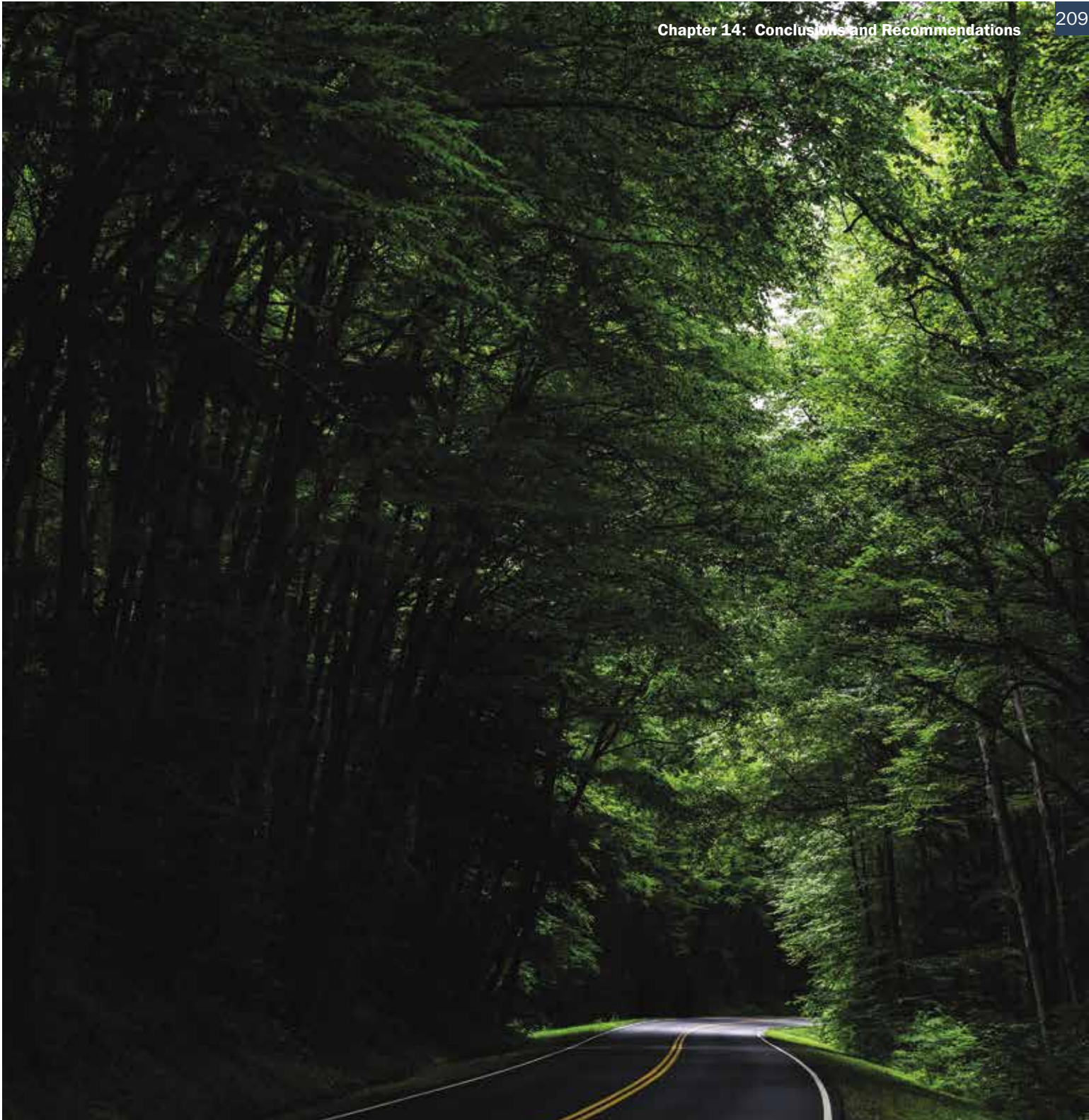
Today's visitors seek authentic experiences when they travel. They want to try local food, explore the local environment, learn about local history and culture, and appreciate local visual and performing arts. Communities in Appalachia should look inward, create an inventory of their local assets and talents, and then strategically leverage these resources to create quality visitor experiences.

Conclusion: While all states in Appalachia report tourism statistics, they often use different approaches, report different measurements, and provide varying levels of access and transparency. This makes it difficult to access information and make valid comparisons across the Region.

Recommendation: States should consider the Tourism Satellite Account standard and permit easy and open access to tourism reports.

While all 13 states in the Region collect and report travel impact statistics, there is no standard methodology for collecting, analyzing, or reporting this information. Many states rely on proprietary models employed by consultants, which can often vary considerably. While most states share their data with the public, they often do so in different ways, and with different levels of access.

This problem is not unique to Appalachia. Travel reporting is, in fact, a global concern. In 2008, the United Nations proposed a global standard for the reporting of travel impacts at a national level: the Tourism Satellite Account. While not perfect, this approach could potentially ensure some level of consistency among state reports. This would allow for improved comparisons. States should also commit to provide public access to all tourism reports and data.



Communities in Appalachia should look inward, create an inventory of their local assets and talents, and then strategically leverage these resources to create quality visitor experiences.



**Appalachian
Regional
Commission**

Appalachian Regional Commission

1666 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 700

Washington, DC 20009-1068

T. 202.884.7700

E. info@arc.gov

www.arc.gov



**THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE**