

Trumbull County Strategic Plan

A photograph of a winter night scene. In the foreground, a large, leafless tree is wrapped in warm white string lights. The ground is covered in a layer of snow. In the background, a large, ornate stone building with a prominent clock tower and a dome is visible. The sky is a deep blue. The text "#Truly Trumpull" is overlaid in a white, cursive font.

#Truly Trumpull

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this strategic plan is to provide a comprehensive framework for the development and promotion of tourism in Trumbull County. This document reflects the board's commitment to fostering economic growth through tourism while preserving the region's unique cultural, natural, and built resources.

Developed through engagement with Trumbull County Tourism's Staff and Board of Directors, this plan is the result of consultations that have taken place since 2018. The goal is to create realistic objectives based on the prior three plans.

This plan outlines Trumbull County Tourism's refreshed vision, mission, why and purpose statements. Additionally, it includes the guiding principles by which the organization operates, along with objectives, strategies, and key performance indicators.

This report articulates Trumbull County Tourism's purpose and describes how its work contributes to lasting, positive impacts across the community. As strategies and tactics evolve to meet future needs and opportunities, the organization's vision and mission will focus on core values and objectives.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ILLUSTRATION

The core of what Trumbull County Tourism does is we make sure Trumbull County look good. The Staff and Board can achieve this by fulfilling its mission to bring the vision and “why” statement to fruition. Trumbull County Tourism Board will achieve this by pursuing the four objectives established in this strategic plan. Additionally, Trumbull County Tourism will apply its guiding principles and values to all aspects of this work.



The framework is designed to be read from the smallest circle to the largest circle, and then to the outer circle.



Introduction

Welcome to the strategic report for Trumbull County Tourism. This report outlines key initiatives to enhance our community's understanding of Trumbull County Tourism's organization, leverage our expertise to advance community priorities, develop a robust workforce plan and work on destination development projects. Our goal is to create a cohesive strategy that aligns with the mission but also amplifies the unique and authentic experiences that Trumbull County offers. By working together, we can ensure that our efforts lead to meaningful and sustainable regional growth. Ultimately, our efforts are to make Trumbull County look good to visitors and residents!



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Trumbull County Tourism is the official Destination Marketing & Management Organization (DMO) dedicated to promoting the sights, sounds, tastes, and experiences of Trumbull County. We are committed to promoting the region as a vibrant destination and enhancing its public image, resulting in positive economic growth for the county.

Our organization:

- An Instrumentality of Government.
- Since 2005, the organization has had a standing resolution and memorandum of understanding with the Trumbull County Commissions office that outlines its relationship with the county.
- Is not a government entity or county department.
- It is directed by a volunteer board comprised of 11 civic and business leaders from throughout the county with a background or interest in the travel and tourism industry.
- In 2023, Trumbull County Tourism tracked 518,000 visitors to the county, a 10.7% increase over 2022.¹
- Plays a vital role in the county's economy, contributing significantly to job creation and local revenue.

Year	Total Economic Impact	Jobs Created (FULL AND PART TIME)	Tax Revenue	Local Tax Base
2021	\$842M	7,600	\$111M	\$23M
2023	\$995.5M	7,708	\$121.2M	\$27.2M
GROWTH	18.2%+	1.4%+	9.1%+	17.8%+

¹ According to Placer.ai

² The organization receives economic impact statistics every two years from Tourism Economics, funded in part by Tourism Ohio and the Ohio Department of Development.

PREVIOUS STRATEGIC WORK COMPLETED BY THE BOARD

Since 2018, the Trumbull County Tourism Board has operated under three strategic plans, each building upon the successes and lessons learned from its predecessor. Through careful implementation and ongoing assessment, these plans have served as dynamic roadmaps, guiding the Board's efforts to promote and enhance tourism throughout the county. The Board has maintained a proactive approach, regularly evaluating the effectiveness of its initiatives and making strategic adjustments to ensure alignment with evolving local needs. This commitment to continual refinement has enabled the Board to remain responsive to changing tourism trends while effectively supporting the county's economic development through visitor engagement and destination marketing.

DMO PROZ — 2018

In 2018, the Board hired one of the premier consulting companies in the DMO industry: Destination Marketing Organization, Zeitgeist Consulting, DMO PROZ. During the planning and review, three goals were established.

1. Enhance Organization Impact
2. Increase Community Outreach and Collaboration
3. Advocate for Destination Development

CONKLIN CONSULTING – 2021

In 2021, the Board engaged local consultant, Karen Conklin to re-prioritize the strategic plan recommendations and identify areas for further review to refocus the Board due to the interruption of COVID.

Priorities included:

1. Enhance the visibility and reach of the Trumbull County Tourism Board
2. Broaden Local, Regional and National impact to increase tourism
3. Expand engagement and collaboration
4. Increase and diversify funding

EUTOPIA-OCO CONSULTING — 2022

The Eutopia-OCO Consulting consultation highlighted and emphasized the importance of the interconnection between tourism growth and other economic development, local placemaking development, and urban activities, especially concerning the availability of suitable housing stock. The report was finalized in 2023.

1. The report identified strategies they felt, as the strongest path to tourism recovery and growth.
2. Regional Game Changer Projects
3. Workforce Development
4. Place Management and Branding

R BRILLIANT MEDIA — 2024

In July 2024, the board hired R Brilliant Media to develop a framework and present ideas to the board, for merging the three reports into foundational objectives forming a strategic plan to advance the organization.

Why, Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

VISION

A vision statement describes a future state -the ultimate outcome of an organization's successful efforts. It should be aspirational but logical, describing an attainable world shaped by your actions. It should be simply written, clear in purpose and inspirational to motivate action.

Through lengthy conversations exploring the purpose of the organization, Trumbull County Tourism's board developed the following vision statement:

VISION

To be a destination that inspires innovation, embraces tradition and continues to support a robust economy

This statement describes a future Trumbull County that results in contributions from Trumbull County Tourism. This is the "Holy Grail" or ultimate destination. This will be the result when the organization successfully pursues the mission, objectives, and strategies laid out in this plan.

As an organization, we strive to attract more visitors and contribute to building a stronger economy for all county residents. Our vision will be sought through our values of integrity and ethics, accountability, humility, passion and results.

MISSION

While a vision statement describes an organization's destination, the mission statement maps how an organization will get there. The mission statement should clearly convey what an organization does and inspire others to get involved, answering simple questions like, "What do you do?", "Why do you do it?", and "Who it is going to serve?"

The following mission statement for Trumbull County Tourism is our roadmap.

MISSION

We are passionate advocates for Trumbull County.
Committed to driving economic growth by inviting people
to experience the unique charm of our community.

The organization strives to achieve the mission while staying true to our guiding principles. We will operate aiming to create lasting, positive impacts across the community.

WHY

The Why statement speaks to the motivation and inspiration that drives an organization to fulfill its mission. It explains the core purpose or reason behind the organizations existence and sets the context for the Vision and Mission.

Our motivation and inspiration come from the belief that by inspiring visitors and locals to experience the region, we cultivate a passion for Trumbull County that contributes to equitable growth.

WHY

We believe that opportunities reside here

Objectives and Strategies

During strategic framework discussions, Trumbull County Tourism Board and Staff examined objectives and strategies through a process of Lead, Contribute, Convene, or Advocate based on the organization's capabilities and capacity.

Through these conversations, the Board decided to focus on four objectives. These objectives are the four pillars the Board will use as its foundation in making decisions:

1. Enhance Our Board Impact
2. Equip Our Regional Industry Workforce
3. Enable Growth Through Destination Development
4. Elevate Community Engagement and Support.

Trumbull County Tourism will determine its role in each of these objectives, and identify Board and Staff contributions.

As roles change and KPI's are met, a suggested filtering process can be found in the index of this report.

The objectives are not presented in order of priority and are not exhaustive. Additionally, a Board "champion" agreed to lead the research and strategy to achieve our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The Board champions are encouraged to recruit additional committee members from outside the board. This not only provides valuable assistance but also serves as a potential pathway for future board positions.

OBJECTIVE 1: ENHANCE OUR BOARD IMPACT

It is essential to have a diverse and skilled board that can provide valuable insights and guidance. This involves identifying the skills and expertise needed, actively recruiting members who meet these criteria, and ensuring a thorough selection process.

STRATEGIES

1. Develop a succession plan for a more diverse and influential board.
LEAD: Board with Staff Support
2. Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for board members.
LEAD: Staff
3. Create a 4-year needs matrix, identifying skillsets that include diversity and then create a list of potential members in each category.
LEAD: Board with Staff Support
4. Identify other boards where Trumbull County Tourism's membership and participation is appropriate.
LEAD: Board

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) FOR 2025

1. **Develop Criteria for Successors:** Define the skills, experience, and attributes required for each key position. Conduct a skills gap analysis to identify areas for improvement. Recruit new board members to fill identified gaps.
2. **Create a Talent Pool:** Identify and develop a pool of potential successors from within organization and externally. Provide them with opportunities for growth and development to prepare them for future leadership roles.
3. **Provide ongoing training and development of Board members:** Identify regional, statewide and national training and development for board members.
4. **Identify Other Boards:** Identify other boards where the Board and Community would benefit from joining and collaborating.

Champion: Alyse Robinson, Tyler Williams

Interested Board Members: Bill Rabel, Stacey Hoover, Becky Whitman, Melanie Cann

Interested Community Members: To be recruited

OBJECTIVE 2: EQUIP OUR REGIONAL INDUSTRY WORKFORCE

In order for Trumbull County Tourism to attract new visitors to the area, we must look at initiatives to upskill and increase our employee pool in the travel and hospitality sector. By investing in workforce development, we are helping to ensure that visitors to the area will feel welcome, and striving to provide a positive visitor experience.

According to US Travel, jobs in the travel industry play a crucial role in shaping the workforce. These positions provide invaluable training in essential skills, build confidence, and offer experiences that pave the way for successful and rewarding careers. Often starting at entry level, travel jobs are instrumental in developing vital soft skills such as communication, dedication, confidence, leadership, flexibility, customer service, and problem-solving.

SUCCESSFUL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS INCLUDE

- Upskilling existing hospitality staff through training
- Attracting staff from other counties
- Re-skilling staff from other industries
- General recruitment development

STRATEGIES

1. Collaborate with other regional workforce innovators to identify and educate our board on their workforce development plan and to evaluate if joining ongoing efforts are feasible.

CONTRIBUTE: Board

2. Create a workforce development plan if other plans do not coincide with Trumbull County Tourism's mission and vision.

LEAD: Board

3. Educate businesses on the training available through Tech Cred and other organizations.

LEAD: Board with Staff Support

4. Collaborate with local universities to develop, expand, or enhance the hospitality program in order to create a feeder to local businesses
ADVOCATE, CONVENE, CONTRIBUTE: Board with Staff Support
5. Create messaging to use with stakeholders' meetings to advocate for workforce development participation.
LEAD: Staff
6. Identify marketing opportunities. Particularly in formal hospitality training
LEAD: Staff with Board Support.
7. Develop or identify relevant job fairs.
LEAD: Board with Staff Support
8. Promote education for growth in a position through state wide and national certification towards management programs in hospitality and retail.
LEAD, ADVOCATE: Staff with Board Support

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) FOR 2025

1. **Collaborate with other regional workforce innovators:** Identify successful work force development programs in the region and decide if advantageous for Trumbull County Tourism to collaborate and contribute to an ongoing program.
2. **Participation in Tech Cred Training:** Announce the program to partners and then track the number of businesses and employees participating in Tech Cred training programs.
3. **University Partnerships:** Initiate meetings with university officials to develop partnerships in hospitality programming.
4. **Identify Marketing Opportunities:** Identify training courses already in place to recommend to partners to allow their staff to obtain certification. Identify and promote job fairs in the hospitality arena and promote to partnership.

Champion: Melanie Cann, Kelli Denman

Interested Board Members: Bill Rabel

Interested Community Members: To be recruited

OBJECTIVE 3: ENABLE GROWTH THROUGH DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Trumbull County's ability to attract visitors and strengthen perceptions about the region will be easier if attractive experiences are available to draw people in and hold their attention. Trumbull County Tourism, through their expertise in the travel and marketing industry and familiarity with local assets and challenges, provides important insights into which investments could enhance the community and help it achieve its objectives.

By amplifying and enhancing more diverse and inclusive experiences, including helping to develop new, enhanced, and collaborative programming, we will educate and engage Trumbull County's hospitality businesses to strengthen Trumbull County as a diverse, equitable, and inclusive destination.

STRATEGIES

1. Research the feasibility of a tournament-grade sports or esports complex
CONVENE, CONTRIBUTE, ADVOCATE: Board with help from Staff
2. Research the feasibility of additional hotels in the county.
CONVENE, CONTRIBUTE, ADVOCATE: Staff
3. Support enhanced accommodations.
ADVOCATE: Board

Champions: Melanie Cann and Kelli Denman

4. Advocate for county-wide wayfinding signage.
CONVENE, ADVOCATE: Board
5. Advocate for a sense of arrival into our communities, county, and townships.
CONVENE, ADVOCATE: Board

Champion: Becky Whitman

6. Advocate for Game Changer Experiences, particularly, the Peninsula Project and The Sci-Fi Experience.

ADVOCATE, CONTRIBUTE: Board

Champions: Stacey Hoover and Bill Rabel

7. Research the feasibility of extended hours for at least one night a week.

ADVOCATE, CONTRIBUTE, CONVENE: Board

Champion: Rosalyn Hill

Interested Board Members for all seven strategies: Nic Coggins and Jordan Taylor.

Interested Community Members: To be recruited

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) FOR 2025

1. **Wayfinding Signage:** Identify the kind of attractions that will be used in county-wide wayfinding (parks, wineries, trails). Determine what government departments can and are interested in being involved in, and craft a plan. Identify who would be responsible for payment of signage. Get a consensus on look and feel of signage.
2. **Feasibility Studies:** Identify and track feasibility studies conducted for a tournament-grade sports or esports complex and additional hotels in the county.
3. **Game Changer Projects Supported:** Monitor the progress of the Game Changer projects, such as the Peninsula Project and The Sci-Fi Experience, and potential new projects, and report to the Board the progress of each project quarterly.
4. **Extended Hours Implemented:** Research the feasibility of opening later for one night a week and what night of the week (starting with Warren as a test). Identify interested businesses and organizations and set a timeline to start.

Note: Because there are so many avenues to destination development, various champions were assigned different tasks.

OBJECTIVE 4: ELEVATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

While attracting visitors is crucial, fostering a strong connection with residents is equally essential. By actively engaging and educating our community on things to do in the county along with our organization and our role, we can cultivate a sense of ownership, pride in the County, and support for Trumbull County Tourism and its role in driving economic growth.

STRATEGIES

1. Identify the top 100 most influential individuals for personal contact and increase interaction with these leaders.
LEAD: Board
2. Create messaging to engage the residents of Trumbull County.
LEAD: Staff
3. Consider additional funding models to increase the budget, specifically a “Pay to Play” model.
LEAD: Staff with input from Board

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) FOR 2025

1. **Funding Model Implementation:** Implement and then measure the success of new funding models by tracking the increase in budget and the adoption rate of the “Pay to Play” model.
2. **Identify the Top 100 most influential individuals in county:** Devise a method for collecting names of influential individuals. Consider residents, business owners, local organizations and community leaders.
3. **Community Outreach:** Create messaging and activities aimed at fostering a sense of connection and involvement. Decide on the vehicle(s) for promoting the board's influence and role in the county either through events or advertising.

Champion: Stacey Hoover, Tyler William

Interested Board Members: ALL

Interested Community Members: To be recruited



Appendices

DMO PROZ

GOAL 1: ENHANCE ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

- Reimage the TCTB Membership program for a 2019 roll out
- Consider additional funding models to increase the TCTB Budget
- Complete revision of Grants program policies
- Consider updates to the organization's by-laws
- Develop an intentional succession plan to develop a more diverse and influential board

GOAL 2: INCREASE COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION

- Secure a seat on the Board of the Port Authority
- Identify other Boards on which TCTB engagement would be appropriate
- Identify the 100 most influential individuals for personal contact
- Create a Destination Advisory Council of area CEOs to discuss development issues
- Increase partner engagement at the Semi and Annual Meetings
- Increase Board interaction with key community leaders
- Increase media visibility (the Tribune, TV, Radio, and social media)

GOAL 3: ADVOCATE FOR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

- Advocate for countywide wayfinding signage
- Research the feasibility of a Tournament Grade Sports Complex
- Consider developing a countywide Destination Development Plan
- Actively support efforts to rename and enhance Mosquito Lake
- Work with community merchants to extend hours into evening and weekends
- Support initiatives to resume commercial air service to the region without subsidization

CONKLIN CONSULTING

PRIORITY 1 : REIMAGINE THE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM TO CREATE A PATHWAY FOR GROWTH

Recommended changes to the membership program including fees and changes to benefits.

PRIORITY 2: BOARD DEVELOPMENT (SUCCESSION PLANNING)

- List of potential candidates in each category will be presented
- Board will become more diverse than 2021 as openings occur
- Board understands needed skillsets to move the board forward
- Create a 4-year 2022 to 2026 needs grid for current board

PRIORITY 3: RESEARCH RURAL/AGRI TOURISM

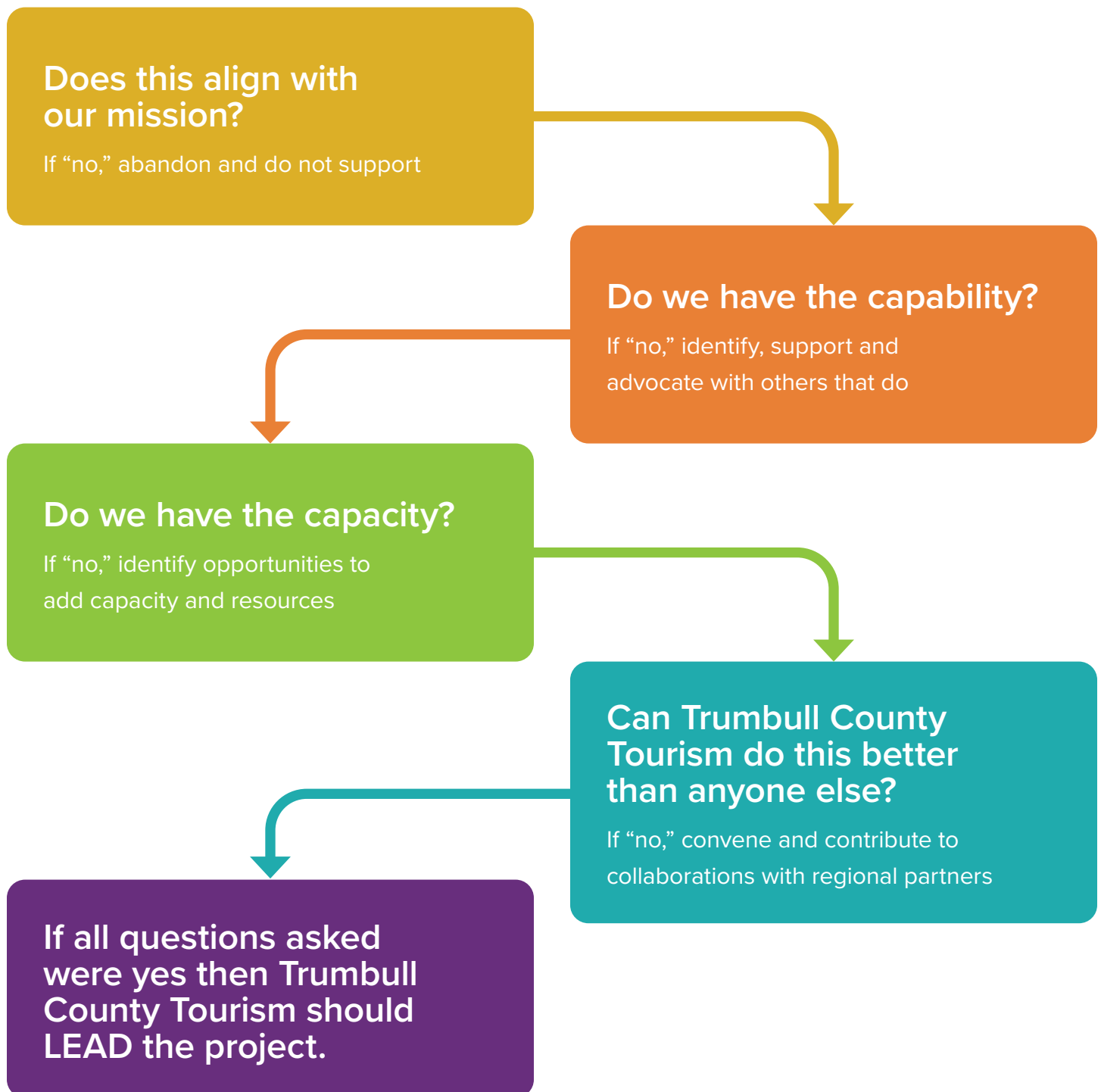
- Listening Sessions
- TCTB will support all viable options within the scope of the organizations mission
- Identify any gaps in service to Northern Trumbull County that may need to be addressed.

EUTOPIA — OCO CONSULTING

THREE KEYS TO TOURISM RECOVERY AND GROWTH

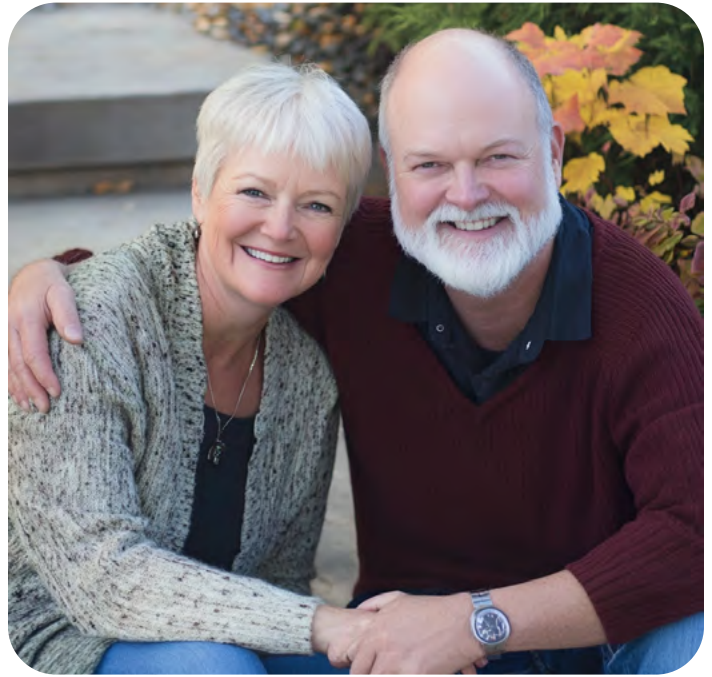
- Regional Game Changer Projects such as new lodging at Mosquito Lake or new high tech museum celebrating the areas history.
- Workforce Development Programs
- Place Management and Branding including utilizing old buildings to create areas of creativity and interest

HOW DO WE GET TO WHERE WE WANT TO GO?



PRIMARY AUDIENCE PERSONAS

The primary visitor demographic for Trumbull County consists of individuals aged 51-65, identified as “Settled and Sensible” according to Experian Mosaic. This group is characterized by mature, established couples with adult children and occasionally includes singles residing in suburban and rural neighborhoods. They lead humble lives with stable lifestyles, often with limited financial savings and modest spending habits. Many are retired, enjoying a quieter pace of life



The second most common visitor group to Trumbull County is the “suburban Sophisticates,” typically aged 66-75. These individuals are considered established sophisticates who enjoy comfortable lifestyles. Most are retired and financially secure, often being members of AARP. They live in well-established homes and are avid newspaper readers, reflecting their engagement with current events and interest in maintaining an informed lifestyle.

SWOT Analysis

DESTINATION

Strengths

- Rich cultural heritage, diverse attractions, including a strong outdoor offering and strong community support.

Weaknesses

- Infrastructure challenges.
- Few differentiations between neighboring counties and states are hard to determine.
- Lack of hotels and housing
- Lack of wayfinding signage
- Public opinion is our worst enemy

Opportunities

- Growing interest in sustainable tourism and outdoor activities.
- Work needs done on Tourism enablers and development.
- One or two “Game Changer” bets need to be placed for Visitor attractions.

Threats

- Economic fluctuations and competition from neighboring regions.
- The tourism is operating in supply constrained environment around quality hotels, in part from the long-term residencies of workers from overseas
- Skills capacity and workforce development is also an issue.
- People don't like change

SWOT Analysis

ORGANIZATIONAL

Strengths

- Passionate, engaged, and active board.
- Diverse Board members representing and giving voice to various sectors and large areas of the county.

Weaknesses

- Limited marketing budget.
- Certain skillsets are needed to round out the board, such as a Lawyer and an Accountant.
- Under representation by the Northern/rural part of the county.

Opportunities

- Marketing performance is relatively robust but needs more investment.
- Potential agreement between Youngstown and Trumbull County Tourism for a stronger Tourism office.
- Possible incremental revenue increases in pay to play marketing.
- Board publicly talking about tourism.
- More interaction with other significant boards.

Threats

- Changes in Commissioners office.
- Unstable funding.
- No control over the product.
- New board members might now feel the same about the established goals and may not be as passionate about what current board is passionate about.

WHERE ARE TRUMBULL'S VISITORS COMING FROM?

	Ashtabula	Geauga	Lawrence	Mahoning	Mercer	Stark	Summit	Trumbull
44 - Cleveland, Akron, Youngstown, OH	88.7%	91.5%	5.0%	85.7%	12.7%	104.6%	64.3%	87.1%
16 - Erie, PA	1.6%	0.3%	84.8%	3.0%	72.1%	0.2%	0.2%	2.4%
43 - Columbus, Toledo, OH	1.8%	2.0%	0.3%	1.7%	0.5%	3.6%	5.3%	1.1%
15 - Pittsburgh, PA	0.6%	0.8%	5.4%	2.3%	4.6%	0.4%	0.5%	1.6%
45 - Cincinnati, Dayton, OH	0.8%	0.6%	0.1%	0.5%	0.2%	1.4%	1.8%	0.5%
48 - Detroit, MI	0.6%	0.5%	0.1%	0.7%	0.3%	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%
33 - Miami, FL	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
32 - Jacksonville, FL	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
14 - Buffalo, NY	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
34 - Tampa, Orlando, FL	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%

% of visits by County to Top 50 Attractions and Experian Mosaic Group





The table shows origins of visits based on mobile phone signals. Data was provided at 5-digit zip codes, but for ease of analysis, they have been paired back to two digits. The table then provides the top 10 zip code groups across the counties.

This shows the vast majority of visits to each county's top 50 attractions come from the local vicinity for most of the counties, to the extent that marketing for tourism should be localized.

The Trumbull case does show some traffic from the Erie and Pittsburgh areas that could be targeted further, given they are relatively close.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE MACRO TRENDS FOR TRUMBULL COUNTY?

Trends and opportunities can be drawn initially from the international and national data collected in this section, and related to Trumbull County’s key strengths and market segments which can appeal to different segments of the industry.

			
Focus on the domestic leisure market as the greatest opportunity segment for Trumbull County.	Private auto transport — ensure adequate accessible, scenic routes and ample parking for private automobiles.	Organic social media marketing may be the most useful channels for Trumbull County.	Shopping, sightseeing and nature parks are priority activities across traveler types, with experiences top of the agenda.





Inspiring Brilliance



PRESENTED BY

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