



Visit Winston-Salem Receives Board Approval of 2020-21 Budget

WINSTON-SALEM, NC (June 17, 2020) – Today the Forsyth County Tourism Development Authority (FCTDA) board approved Visit Winston-Salem’s \$3.2 million annual budget and its strategic marketing and sales plan for fiscal year 2020-21.

“Our strategic mission and funding are rooted in driving hotel occupancy, but like so many organizations worldwide, Visit Winston-Salem was dealt a significant economic blow due to COVID-19. In less than 90 days, we went from experiencing our strongest stretch of economic growth and executing our largest budget to developing a new sales and marketing plan with a 34% budget reduction,” said Richard Geiger, president of Visit Winston-Salem.

“With guidance and support from the Board, our team has rolled up our sleeves and sharpened our pencils to strategically craft a streamlined plan that continues to allow us to strongly promote Winston-Salem as an ideal destination for leisure travelers, sports organizers and meetings and conventions planners,” Geiger added.

“Beginning in mid-March, Winston-Salem, like every place, experienced a steep decline in travel and correspondingly we saw hotel occupancy and revenue plummet,” said Geiger. “While we are seeing some extremely modest upticks, we are at approximately half of the hotel occupancy we were at this time last year. We remain optimistic this steady recovery will continue into 2021.”

The 2020-21 plan focuses on targeted digital advertising and promotions to support the launch of a new website as well as leveraging strong partnerships with in-state meeting planners and continued efforts to secure national and regional earned media mentions.

The annual budget includes approved funding for up to \$150,000 from the Visit Winston-Salem Convention & Sports Support (CSS) initiative. CSS dollars are allocated to qualified organizations to offset costs such as convention center/facility rentals, convention shuttles and parking as well as bid fees to pursue sporting events and tournaments. The groups receiving CSS funds are expected to generate more



than 35,000 hotel room nights with an estimated economic impact of \$33 million, returning \$222 to the Winston-Salem's economy for every dollar invested.

Additionally, the Board decided the Arts & Events Marketing Assistance (AEMA) program will be postponed for the 2020-21 budget allowing the funds to be better leveraged in a more integrated marketing buy for digital and print advertising, social media mentions, promotional opportunities, and enhanced public relations efforts.

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About Visit Winston-Salem (www.VisitWinstonSalem.com)

Visit Winston-Salem is the official sales and marketing agency for the Winston-Salem and Forsyth County tourism industry. A sophisticated meeting destination, Winston-Salem is conveniently and strategically located at the epicenter of North Carolina's Piedmont Triad region. It is easily accessible by car via Interstate 40, Business Interstate 40, Interstate 77, Interstate 85 and U.S. Highway 52. Scheduled air service is available through Piedmont Triad International Airport, just 20 minutes east of Winston-Salem.

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