

Destination 2028

DESTINATION STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITY

8. Quality of Place



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Priority Focus

Sew a thread of destination place-making within all areas of Wake County's future

"If you build a place where people want to visit, you will build a place where people want to live. If you build a place where people want to live, you will build a place where people want to work. If you build a place where people want to work, you will build a place where business has to be. If we build a place where business has to be, we will be back to building a place where people have to visit."

- Maura Gast, Executive Director of the Irving, Texas Convention and Visitors Bureau.

In the context of the quote from Maura Gast above, the Raleigh area built a great place to live, work and study. By doing so, the region became a great place to visit. However, by needing to rely on these aspects of the community as some of the key differentiators to market Wake County to potential visitors, the task of elevating Wake County's Quality of Place becomes complex.

It is important to note the distinction between quality of life and quality of place. Quality of Life is defined by Britannica as "the degree to which an individual is healthy, comfortable, and able to participate in or enjoy life events." This term is most often used in economic development to recruit new businesses or develop a broader residential base.

For purposes of the DSP, Quality of Place is defined as the culmination of combinations including the critical mass of experiences created for residents and visitors to the community through economic momentum, public investment, private investment, philanthropic investment and the benefits of having a state capital as the anchor city in the county. Quality of Place includes all the assets today that residents love that can be positioned for visitors to experience. It can also mean planning for the future of such a place. Quality of Place is an extension of the brand essence of the community.

What Currently Sets Wake County Apart

Throughout the research and development phases of the DSP, stakeholders and residents bemoaned the lack of a clear key travel driver that would spark true interest and awareness in the destination.

When Stakeholders were asked about destination strengths, the word association that emerged showed no clearly distinctive attribute. Parks, Sports, Museums, Downtown, and Arts were each positioned at the same level, followed closely by Culture, College, Food, Restaurants and Universities.

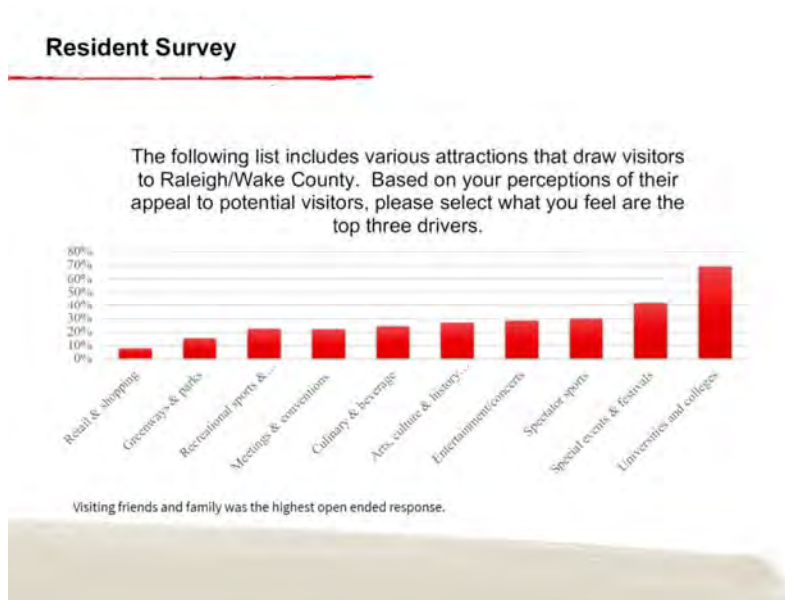
Events Craft Beer Breweries Proximity Music
 Beach and Mountains Culture Greenways College
 Location Parks Weather Sports
 Convention Center Museums Capital Arts
 Green Downtown Local Food RDU Restaurants
 Variety Universities History

The list appears to show a diverse, vibrant, active destination that would have market appeal to many visitor groups. The list also seems to capture attributes that are highly sought after by potential residents choosing an area to live.

Residents of Wake County were equally unsure of the area’s true destination appeal. Resident survey responses highlighted a perceived

awareness and assumed drawing power of universities that far surpassed other potential destination products. As this chart shows, variances in the perceived appeal of special events, spectator sports, entertainment and concerts, arts and culture, culinary, meetings and conventions, recreational sports and parks were fairly nominal. Residents ranked shopping assets as the lowest potential driver among this list likely viewing the area’s retail options as being focused on filling local resident needs versus being compelling enough to elicit overnight visitors.

When these same residents were asked to document their perceptions of what individuals in other cities knew about Raleigh/Wake County, the response was overwhelmingly focused on four features of the region’s livability: Great universities and colleges, Opportunities and jobs, Great place to live and Research Triangle Park. These livability assets were so firmly entrenched in the resident perceptions that the lowest ranked of the four was still 30 percentage points ahead of “Great food and drink scene,” the fifth highest ranking awareness factor.



Resident Survey

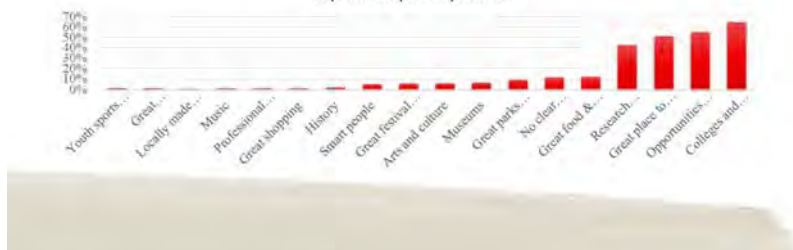
Most open ended responses were "nice"

- Good place to live
- Good schools
- Affordable
- Family values

There were a few comments around the political climate

- Backwards politics
- Perception of negative conservatism

In your opinion, what do you believe people living in other places think about Raleigh/Wake County? Please select your top three perceptions.



This finding was consistently probed in interviews and focus groups to determine the impact of these perceptions. These interviews substantiated the survey findings with an undertone of pride in the place. The basic sentiment could best be summarized by a feeling that Wake County is a successful travel destination welcoming nearly 16.45 million visitors in 2017 that drive over \$2.53 billion in travel spending and this economic production is happening despite not having a demonstratively appealing destination driver. The individuals and groups that provided this input were not upset or saddened by the reality of the perception, but rather they

maintained a realistic stance that Wake County was just simply a great place for economic opportunity and employment. This could also be that very few in the community have considered the area has enough assets to now tout the region as a great place to visit. This may not be the majority shared psyche of Wake County's residents.

The tourism industry thrives off economic opportunity. Business travel is enormously dependent upon the economic health of area employers. Meetings and conventions configure around topics and local sources that are connected to key industries. Economic opportunity is a driver of tourism, but it is not typically viewed as a targeted strategic area for the destination marketing and promotion efforts, with the recruitment of connected conventions being a recognized exception. Destination development efforts concentrate more explicitly on quality of life features. These quality of life components house the activities that visitors and residents both enjoy. Entertainment, sports, tranquil parks, shopping and dining are clear components of quality of life. So are safety, ease of access, ease of getting around, climate and health.

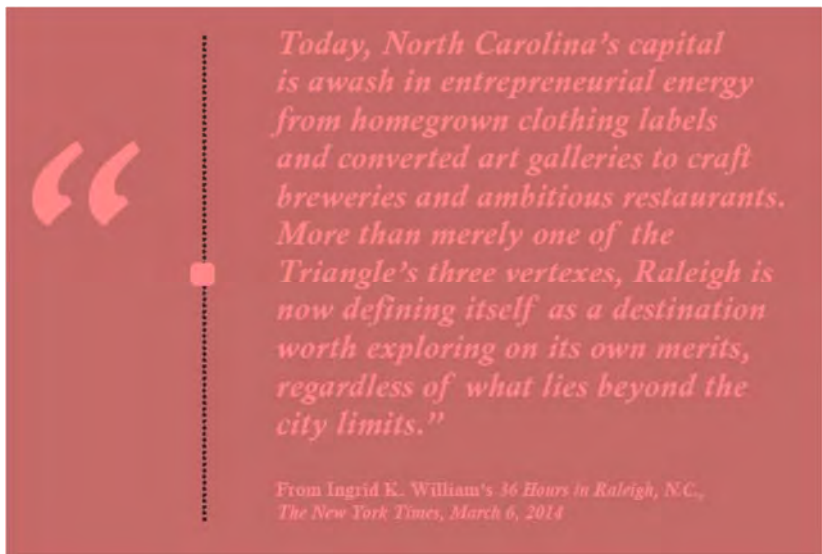
Quality of life is abundantly high throughout Wake County. The area routinely finds its way into top places on quality of life, places to do business and other community comparison rankings.

The popularity and interest created by this level and quantity of praise in the area fuels a growth cycle that shows no signs of slowing. Potential residents see the area's vitality and they want to move to Wake County bringing diverse talents, skills and acumen to the region. Prospective employers, especially in science and technology sectors, see this talent pool and want to move to the county to have access to the skilled workforce. Students graduate from area institutions and stay for the opportunities offered by the talent hungry employers. And so, the cycle continues.

The level of interest in Wake County has caused the region to shift into rarified level of respect typically applied to high growth, high tech areas like Silicon Valley, Seattle, Boston, Austin and Nashville. Over the last year, Raleigh has been one of only three cities to make it to the coveted finalist decision making phase for the next Apple complex, the high-profile Amazon HQ2 and the U.S. Army Futures Command Center.

As the center of the brand is the community name that carries the most recognition. In comparison to the earlier Orlando example, "Raleigh, N.C." makes its county and communities stronger as a destination through connecting its greatest strength to the destination brand. For Orlando it is the memories sparked by a family vacation. For Raleigh and Wake County it is the innovative hospitality of its people. The brand is as real and authentic as the place.

This DSP firmly establishes that the livability of Wake County is at the heart of its destination appeal. There is not one singular driver that the destination is currently known for, but rather the collective blend of all aspects of the county creates a distinctively vibrant place to visit. This claim should not be construed as an endorsement of a "livability" promotion campaign, as it would not be authentic nor compelling, but rather to an



endorsement that building a brand climate around livability, which Wake County has successfully accomplished would be of value.

There are many communities that offer quality of life and their destination marketing efforts often showcase quality of life through sidewalk bistros, parks, shopping and nightlife. Raleigh and Wake County extends this approach further by connecting with the people that pursue these different community assets. The Passionate Minds approach (noted and expanded upon below) is fully focused on supporting not just quality of like but quality of place.

As Wake County shrouds itself in exploiting and leveraging its current brand promise, intentionality should be placed on building a stronger linkage to this notion of quality of place. The following needs should be filled to continue the successful growth of the region and ties to the destination:

- Culturalize the Passionate Minds brand
- Prepare for Population Growth
 - Plan, Develop & Coordinate Parks and Greenways
 - Plan, Develop and Coordinate Entertainment
- Alleviate Transportation Concerns
- Add Iconic Features and Attractors to the Landscape
 - Establish a landmark fund
 - Encourage creative public art and high-profile activations
 - Develop a one-of-a-kind attraction

Initiatives

Culturalize the Passionate Minds Brand

The entrepreneurial, crafty, humble, open-sourced mindset of the technology and life science workforce that made the Wake County area so attractive to these employers is the basis for GRCVB's Passionate Minds brand promise. The brand promise is built on powerfully, creative individuality. The local "celebrities" featured with this brand embody the personality, diversity, hard-working mentality of the region.

The Passionate Minds brand messaging is on target and captures the strengths of the area. As much as the brand has created mystique and a powerful connection to its core promise, the brand lacks visibility and use locally, both within and outside the area's tourism industry. Within the boundaries of the City of Raleigh the brand is most visible near the convention center. Efforts should be taken to blanket the area with visual reminders of the brand promise and gain commitment within the stakeholder community to embrace the brand and brand promise. This immersion

into the brand promise should first start with the hospitality industry using digital connections, stand-up displays and even apparel to highlight the pride in place that exists in the area.

DESTINATION BRAND PROMISE STATEMENT

Visitors to Raleigh will depart feeling enriched by what they have experienced in this Southern capital city, thanks to Raleigh's smart and passionate residents who are shaping the growth of the historic city's emerging creative businesses, innovative festivals and food establishments, passionate music and sports scenes and modern cultural experiences.

GRCVB and its marketing agency should work together to accomplish the following:

- Establish brand immersion goals for the next five years
- Develop a brand asset toolkit to distribute to the hospitality industry
- Incentivize and reward brand apostles with promotion and features in newsletters
- Highlight targeted business outside the hospitality industry for brand engagement
- Empower the Passionate Minds representatives to act as a speaker's bureau
- Perform a publicly televised search for the next class of Passionate Minds members
- Activate brand messaging at targeted events and gatherings throughout the community

Wake County communities outside the City of Raleigh can and should actively engage in the destination's brand beyond the logo concept. Places like Cary, Wake Forest and Garner live together in the Raleigh area but cling to their own individuality and place. These surrounding communities want to see their name within a logo treatment. Indianapolis, Columbus and Minneapolis all have separate marketing efforts for the city and each of its suburbs. The end result of these disconnected marketing efforts is confusion of place. The visitor lives in other areas of the country, not locally. Place names matter locally. The communities of Wake County should work with GRCVB to develop localized brand engagement that highlights the dimensions of each municipality:

- Build brand promise concepts targeting how each municipality in Wake County is part of the Passionate Minds brandscape highlighting unique personalities, images and messages.
- Highlight the destination products of each community within GRCVB promotional pieces
- Encourage use of the extensive GRCVB database of assets for localized website and collateral development
- Develop logo connectors for each municipality that tie to the appropriate squares in the logo.



The overarching intention of this brand acculturation must extend beyond logos and data tools. The Passionate Minds message is not about a place name, it is about the place's people. The successful realization that all the communities in the area play a role in supporting

that cast of residents is the ultimate goals in localizing the brand. All brand related work should continually be focused on the initial promise of the Passionate Minds.

Prepare for Population Growth

By every projection the population of Wake County is slated to continue its growth trajectory. In their March 22, 2018, *News and Observer* article entitled “Wake wasn’t the Triangle’s fastest growing county last year,” Richard Straddling and David Raynor analyzed U.S. Census Bureau data to confirm that in the year of July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017, 23,060 new residents were estimated to have established new residency in Wake County. This figure calculates out to 63 new residents per day. The Raleigh metro area is the 16th fastest growing metropolitan area in the nation. The increase in population within the county is not projected to slow. The Urban Institute projects that the Raleigh area will hit a population of 2.7 million by 2030, an increase over the next 13 years of 500,000 new regional residents. (*Rolf Pendall, Steven Martin, Nan Marie Astone, Austin Nichols, Kaitlin Franks Hildner, Allison Stolte, and H. Elizabeth Peters, Urban Institute, Mapping America’s Futures, Brief 1: Scenarios for Regional Growth from 2010 to 2030, Jan. 2015*).

Weaknesses, Threats & Opportunities 

<i>Top Weaknesses & Threats</i>	<i>Top Opportunities</i>
• Transportation infrastructure/ Traffic and congestion	• Light rail
• Politics (and perception of)	• Bold and progressive political stance (Austin vs. Texas)
• Lack of natural attractions (water feature)	• Preservation of open space
• Weather in the summer	• Development of Moore Square
• Small town perception	• Development of Crabtree as a water feature (San Antonio example)
• Lack of signature attraction	• Youth sports
• Connectivity between assets/areas	• Development of Dorothea Dix
• Hotel package	• Sports spectator events
• Lack of professional teams and venues in the downtown core	• Increased visibility of cultural assets
• Lack of overall identity	• Create a "must see" attraction
• Crime and homelessness	• Downtown events and activities
• Growth and land use	• More flight options out of RDU
• Lack of cohesion between promotional groups (GRCVB, RDU, Wake County, Triangle, RTP, etc.)	• RDU trail center
	• Major league sports

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One of the catalysts for absorbing past growth has been smart community planning across the Triangle region. With aggressive and strategic land-use planning and smart investments in regional infrastructure, the region will not only fulfill these growth projections but also establish stronger bonds the current residents. Regional population growth will create more dynamic engagement within the sharing economy. Homesharing through apps like AirBnB are projected to become more prevalent, especially given the technology aptitude of the region and rising real estate costs. Ridesharing coordinated through apps such as LYFT and Uber provide new access to transportation serving both visitors to the destination and residents. Access to Wi-Fi and use of beacon related technology is slated to continue to progress through the course of the next 10 years. The DSP recognizes that technology enabled community development will be a progressive part of Wake County’s future. The DSP acknowledges that technological advancement and change should be continually reviewed and where appropriate accepted and implemented. Technology is a critical component of the rise in prominence of the region so early adoption of new opportunities is important.

Two additional hallmarks of the region's past are solid investments in parks and greenway systems and continued funding of entertainment and cultural resources. Both parks and entertainment are enormously important to the county's perceived Quality of Place.

Plan, Develop & Coordinate Parks and Greenways

The greenway system stretching across Wake County provides a valuable recreational asset to both residents and visitors. State, county and local parks are dotted across the county, each with a separate function. The County Parks system focuses on providing outdoor recreation and preservation of natural resources. The local parks have largely fulfilled recreational programming, particularly sports related activities. Greenways connect many of these systems providing another recreational opportunity and an alternative mode of transportation. The image of a vibrant parks system is a component of Wake County's attractiveness. All of Wake County's communities were interviewed for the DSP, and in each case the local leaders talked about the importance of parks and the need for continued investment in parkland, park development and park maintenance. Blending this perceived importance locally with the need to grow stronger as a destination should be a goal from the DSP. Park resources add to the community's appeal and are a source of pride among residents. Future park and greenway planning should be conducted with inclusion of the visitor marketplace. As noted, a very high-profile example of this is Dorothea Dix Park.

Efforts should be taken to connect local parks programming as the visitor does not recognize the physical boundaries of a municipality. Proactive communication across local parks systems can help to plan compatible programming and land use. This level of planning needs to be a major part of the region's future.

Plan, Develop and Coordinate Entertainment

Performing arts and concerts provide an attractive enhancement for a community. Wake County offers a robust blend of artistic and cultural offerings. Patrons to these pursuits consist of both area residents and visitors. Headliner, topflight performers have indoor and outdoor options for venues in all parts of the county. Galleries and museums dot the area to showcase the visual arts. Ballet, orchestra and opera are valuable institutions that demark artistic achievement for the area. The intent of most programming is focused on the local resident, but nearly all arts and cultural organizations acknowledge the importance of tourism.

Over the course of the destination strategic planning process, the vitality of the arts and cultural base of the area was heralded. There were perceived concerns expressed around the growth of arts and cultural activities being held in Durham. The greatest concern in the area was a large shift in Broadway style performances out of Raleigh. Overall the arts and entertainment product of the area is a strength of the area and a key dimension of its overall quality of place. Future efforts to connect the arts and cultural segment to tourism depend on the following tactics:

- Development of a truly coordinated countywide calendar of arts offerings
- Coordination and collaborative funding for a countywide arts marketing program
- Creation of arts packages for high interest programs
- Proactive and deliberate program planning to encourage cross-promotions
- Revisiting the Arts and Cultural Plan for the area to add greater relevance to the growing visitor base of the county.

These tactics must provide an intersection between resident needs and visitor desires. The resulting arts and entertainment strategy will enhance this important dimension of the area's quality of place.

Alleviate Transportation Concerns

In preparing for a region's future growth, transportation is almost always a top concern. Transportation concerns are typically shared across all populations regardless of whether the population lives in the area or simply visits the area. Within the DSP, transportation was the most frequently expressed concern. Congestion of the highways, growing demands on infrastructure, preparing for continued insurgence of new residents were elements of the discussions that surfaced around the concept of transportation. The respondents to the Resident Survey listed transportation as the area's greatest future challenge.

Solutions for this future were not often provided. Connecting these solutions to the growing visitation to Wake County provided an additional obstacle. A few ideas prevailed, although the feasibility of these solutions for the could be challenging either because of costs or usability:

- **Bus Rapid Transit** – The new plan to greatly enhance public bus transportation can provide some relief and connectivity, especially if the visitor experience is positive. In many destinations, visitors to a community will use the local bus transit system sparingly. The system must be creatively designed, reach throughout the destination and speedily stay on schedule to capture usage by a share of overnight visitors.
- **Commuter Rail** – Commuter rail concepts in most cities are focused on getting employees in more distant suburbs to key access points near employers. In some cases, business travelers will access commuter rail, and airports typically are included on the route. Commuter rail will often be provided on designated freight line systems; the priority given to freight use and the possibility of delays will not appeal to the visitor.

Potential visitor-facing transportation solutions, continued

- **Light Rail** – Evidence from Portland, Minneapolis, Austin and Charlotte show support the assumption that visitors will use light rail systems to move around a community and region. Connecting light rail systems to hospitality neighborhoods is an important dimension of destination planning. Not only will visitors use the platform to see different parts of the community or travel from hotels on the outskirts of town to key event venues or access the airport and train station of the area, but locally based employees in the hospitality sector will use light rail to get to and from work. The system must be consistently scheduled and have planned stops near key hospitality clusters. Crabtree, Brier Creek, Garner, RDU and Midtown/North Hills should all be targeted connections for a light rail system.
- **Alternative Transportation** – Creative concepts for mass transit outside of rail, bus or vehicles were collected during various DSP meetings. Gondolas connecting downtown to N.C. State University to Crabtree Valley Mall to RDU was an idea shared in the process. This idea sparked additional ideas for a targeted monorail system, driverless pods, and other technology based, one-of-a-kind transportation options.

This DSP does not endorse one form of alternative transportation over others, but it does encourage the creative inclusion of alternative options as part of future transportation planning. This direction includes both the highly complex systems like monorails and gondolas and the more simplistic but ever so important systems of biking and pedestrian. The visitor population would utilize any well-planned alternative transportation form, and in many cases the alternative transportation would provide an interesting and dynamic new product for the community.

The region will likely use different models of transportation for its future transportation needs. However, RDU International Airport will also likely remain an important transportation node for the region. RDU has grown service, capacity, customers and output in close coordination with the growth of the region. Today, the airport is ranked as the best connected medium sized airport in the county. The airport will continue to play a fundamental role in increasing tourism to Wake County.

Transportation solutions are expensive, especially when an entire system must be designed. The growth of the Wake County necessitates a heightened role for transportation planning. The immediacy of this need is intense and will only continue to grow more pressing.

Top 10 Best-Connected Medium-Size U.S. Airports

Rank	Airport	Airport Connectivity Quality Index	2015-2016 Change
1.	Raleigh-Durham Int'l	185.2	7.0%
2.	St. Louis Lambert Int'l	175.1	0.4%
3.	Nashville Int'l	173.7	6.8%
4.	Austin-Bergstrom Int'l	152.8	2.0%
5.	Indianapolis Int'l	150.4	5.6%
6.	Kansas City Int'l	150.0	3.7%
7.	Pittsburgh Int'l	149.6	-1.4%
8.	Cleveland Hopkins Int'l	146.8	0.2%
9.	Louis Armstrong New Orleans Int'l	146.7	6.4%
10.	John Glenn Columbus Int'l	144.9	1.9%

Source: InterVISTAS

Add Iconic Features and Attractors to the Landscape

As noted earlier within the section, the residents and tourism industry stakeholder of Wake County did not feel there were identifiable community icons that resonate with potential visitors. Overcoming this weakness should be a focus for the implementation of the DSP. Over the short-term the area's key attractors can each play a role in driving destination interest. Beyond those efforts, the pursuit of iconic level additions to the destination mix should be a priority. JLL recommends that the area pursue the following opportunities related to building a more recognizable, iconic destination:

- Establish a landmark fund
- Encourage creative public art and high-profile activations
- Develop a one-of-a-kind attraction

Establish a Landmark Fund

The concept of adding iconic features arose on many separate occasions throughout the DSP process. Although there was never one singular iconic landmark devised through the process, the desirability of adding future recognizable landmarks to the region was an expressed need. Many communities have adopted public art investment requirements as part of any large-scale new development. Denver, in particular, has used this requirement to create a dynamic and iconic level public art program. Images of Denver landmarks often include artwork paid for by this development fund like the Big Blue Bear, the Dancers and the Blue Mustang.



This DSP recommends that a similarly styled investment program be legislated for Wake County. New development would be required to make investment into iconic landmarks and features as part of the building and planning process. This iconic level of development would be highly differentiated from public art programs, including using a separate destination level set of judges to determine the applicability of “iconic.” Requiring iconic style design and implementation would transform the destination and produce far-reaching economic development benefits. Adding iconic substance to Wake County would further enhance the area’s quality of place and resident community pride.

The funding for these iconic installation or landmark features would be structured similarly to public art required developer fees implemented in communities like Denver. The *1988 Executive Order No. 92* launched the Denver Public Art program by requiring developers of construction projects of over \$1 million to set aside 1% of the development budget aside for public art. Within the DSP, the recommended funding model is similar, but the focus of the fund investment is to enliven the destination with new iconic and landmark amenities. The details of this program concept will need to be crafted with input from visionaries around the community and perspectives gathered from other communities like Denver that have re-envisioned their community’s uniqueness through targeted investments.

Encourage Creative Public Art and High-Profile Activations

Iconic landmarks are very different in form and function from creative public art. To the visitors’ eyes, an iconic feature is a catalyst for creating interest in a prospective visit. In these same eyes, public art helps enhance and enliven that destination. If iconic features provide an added reason to travel to a destination then public art provides a worthy diversion while visiting that destination. In relation to the DSP, public art should continue to be pursued throughout Wake County. Throughout the interviews for this plan, the expressed role of public art was related to stretching the creative connotations of the area. Public art is often associated with vibrant communities. As one individual interviewed expressed, the county needs to “take risks” and “be bold” with future public arts additions throughout the county.

Develop a One-of-a-Kind Attraction

One of the most notable destination opportunities for Wake County is a direct extension from the concept of Quality of Place Priority and a connection to the Passionate Minds brandscape. As an area rich in both, the possible manifestations of this concept are endless. Within the context of the DSP, gaming developers should capitalize on the popularity and appeal of platforms to build a e-sports attraction with heavy visitor engagement activities.

The DSP captured the e-sports opportunity within the Sports priority, but the magnitude of local gaming studios in the marketplace extends beyond the spectator and competitor dimensions of e-sports. The development of a cross-connected destination product would mark a landmark opportunity, potentially on a similar level as immersive

studios tours are in Hollywood. This product could be based on specific game titles, but should be planned for flexibility with future editions, new platforms and technology advancements.

This quality of place strategy encourages investment in a multi-faceted destination product constructed from the game titles and storylines of the region's gaming portfolio. This gaming destination campus(es) would certainly consist of e-sports facilities and retail opportunities, but the studios concept could be extended to include testing grounds of new gaming concepts, physically constructed game-based playscapes for actual interplay by gaming enthusiasts, tours of facilities and offices but not the development areas and opportunities to help make future game concepts come to life.

Industry experts predict that the current growth of gaming will result in an industry with more viewers than the movie industry. Building a studio based attraction, allows Wake County to capitalize on a local industry, create greater attention for a local business and erect an entirely new style of destination product. Constructing a gaming-based attraction on a grand scale provides the physical space for the game and its developer to have another entry into the lives of its fans, and in some cases their parents. It should be noted that estimates show the average player age as 25. This product would establish enormous traction with young potential employees and students while further enhancing the area's quality of place.

Branding a Destination

Some of the most powerful destination brands are constructed around distinctive imagery, geographic features, striking landscapes or iconic physical development. Regardless of local sentiment in the following locales, Orlando is synonymous with Walt Disney World in the same manner that Miami is known for fashionable beaches, Phoenix is connected to desert environments and Las Vegas embodies the notion of adult escapism. Not every destination benefits (or can benefit) from this type of physical association. For places that do not, branding efforts typically go one of three different directions as the place attempts to establish some level of promise to potential visitors:

- *Something for everyone* – Stating that the destination can serve all audiences.
- *Asset connection* – Establishing a mental touchpoint to a community asset.
- *Emotional* – Connecting to feelings evoked by the destination

These brand building approaches have varying degrees of success. “Something for Everyone” typically establishes little consumer value because of its inability to distinguish the destination from other places. Destinations that attempt to build a brand based on asset connections are limited by either how compelling the asset is, or isn't, to desired guests. This impact is elevated further if the asset has a low degree of awareness within the travel marketplace. The emotional option can create connectivity to the destination, but it requires heavily targeted marketing to gain traction and significant investment of resources to build results.

True success in destination branding occurs when these concepts are blended into a truly compelling and emotional connection to the destination product strengths. In the example of Orlando, the destination has captured its name as the largest city in the region. The destination's brand promise references its connection to Walt Disney World, but also extends this concept to include other key attractors like Universal Studios, SeaWorld, shopping and other attractions. The brand promise of the "never-ending story" provides the emotional package that ties all the parts together while generating audience empathy through the lasting memories of travel.

Few destinations possess the demand drivers available to Orlando. Perceptions of product disparity can cloud the view of area residents into misunderstanding that destination attractiveness is not solely dependent on demonstrative assets.

As noted above, some destinations become great places to visit simply by being great places. Wake County is in this mix. Because Wake County is not known for a singular dimension or attractor, it must continue to play upon its strong quality of life to continue to differentiate itself. Additionally, Wake County should consider a future place-making strategy that also includes iconic features and creates that "one-of-a-kind" attraction.

Quality of Place Takeaways

Within the concept of quality of place, a destination embraces the attractiveness of the community to area employers and resident. The embrace includes quality of life features, especially parks and entertainment. The resulting quality of place direction highlights the livability of the destination as an asset for visitors. If the community is not known for a singular dimension or attractor, then the addition of an iconic asset becomes a future place-making strategy. The brand of the destination must embody the physical strengths of the area's quality of place and help differentiate it from other places.

These quality of place dimensions hold direct relevancy to Wake County. The strength of the region's quality of place is clearly visible in its popularity with current residents, students, employers and visitors. The DSP captures the essential elements of Wake County's quality of place and expresses it in the following strategic objectives.

- Culturalize the Passionate Minds brand
- Prepare for Population Growth
 - Plan, Develop & Coordinate Parks and Greenways
 - Plan, Develop and Coordinate Entertainment
- Alleviate Transportation Concerns
- Add Iconic Features and Attractors to the Landscape
 - Establish a landmark fund
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The cumulative goal of quality of place elements in Wake County's Destination Strategic Plan is:

To sew a thread of destination place-making within all areas of Wake County's future.

This goal will help the region reach a higher level of product attractiveness for the livelihood and lifestyles of area residents while adding new capacity for welcoming future guests to the county.