



# KING GEORGE COUNTY

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2022-2027

*Tourism Strategic Plan*



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## I. INTRODUCTION

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The Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) is a committee of volunteers appointed by the King George County Board of Supervisors to represent the tourism industry subgroups. King George's TAC members represent subgroups in Agritourism, Marketing & Promotion, Arts and Events, History, Outdoor Recreation, Lodging, and Civic Groups.

At the request of the King George County Board of Supervisors, the Economic Development and Tourism Department and TAC engaged the tourism business community and neighboring localities to develop a County-wide tourism strategic plan that will guide King George County's development of its tourism industry.

This plan establishes a vision for King George County that lays out desired outcomes, objectives, and overall strategies for public and private sectors. This strategic plan identifies key areas for the county to focus its efforts and funding to develop products county-wide that will increase its competitiveness within the region and State. Furthermore, it establishes a framework for marketing, tourism infrastructure, partnerships, and policies needed to support the county's tourism growth.



### *Why King George County Needs a Tourism Strategic Plan?*

King George has an established tourism industry and significant tourism assets; however, focus is needed to enable growth.

King George needs to build on its tourism assets and successes, establishing a tourism niche that separates itself from its regional neighbors.

King George is dedicated to tourism, and efforts to grow tourism should be strategically laid out.

King George has the chance through this strategic plan to unite the tourism industry within the County and outline a path towards being a state-wide location to visit and live.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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King George County's location and assets make it ideal for tourism; however, the county lacks an overall touristic identity and vision for the future. This strategic plan will provide a clear direction and vision that public and local private tourism organizations can follow and implement. Recurring themes were identified after an inventory of tourism assets and receiving significant feedback from our local and regional stakeholders. Outdoor recreation and historical storytelling were identified as the county's competitive advantage. King George's strategic efforts will be focused on elevating outdoor recreational tourism assets and identifying creative ways to use outdoor activities as the vehicle of historical storytelling.

King George's location is excellent to host family-oriented team sporting events and is currently home to various trail races. Centrally located between the Fredericksburg Region, and southern Maryland, the county's location creates an opportunity to pursue team sporting events and substantially grow existing trail races. Furthermore, a focus on growing the number of musical events and festivals should be a key component to the county's future tourism industry. An emphasis on hosting and sponsoring multicultural events that are welcoming, inclusive, and authentic would add to the creation of a more diverse tourism scene offering something for everyone.

King George is not well known as a tourism destination outside of the region. The continued development of impactful marketing content will be a differentiating factor that will drive tourists to the county. Additionally, working to standardize metrics for tourism-funded activities that measure the performance and impact of marketing channels, events, and content will assist in refocusing efforts and direction. These efforts will help improve decision-making and provide insights needed to make sound decisions for the future. Consistency and creativity will be essential as King George strides to become a regional and statewide outdoor recreational tourism destination.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The Tourism Advisory Committee and Department of Economic Development and Tourism developed and implemented a county-specific approach to develop a plan to gather feedback from our comprehensive stakeholders. The plan focused on exploring three significant areas. 1) Where are we now? 2) Where do we want to be? 3) How do we get there? Within these three areas, questions of the industry and regional partners were conducted along with a community-wide stakeholder survey.



This was followed up with three public town hall meetings where the department and TAC facilitated a broader conversation about our vision, mission, and unique selling propositions that will drive our tourism focus.

## 4. KEY INSIGHTS & OBJECTIVES

By consolidating and analyzing all the data and feedback, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism and Tourism Advisory Committee identified strategic objectives and critical insights that will assist in executing the strategic plan.

**SWOT analysis:** Throughout the Tourism Strategic Planning, three SWOT analyses were conducted with our industry partners, regional partners, and community residents.

### STRENGTHS

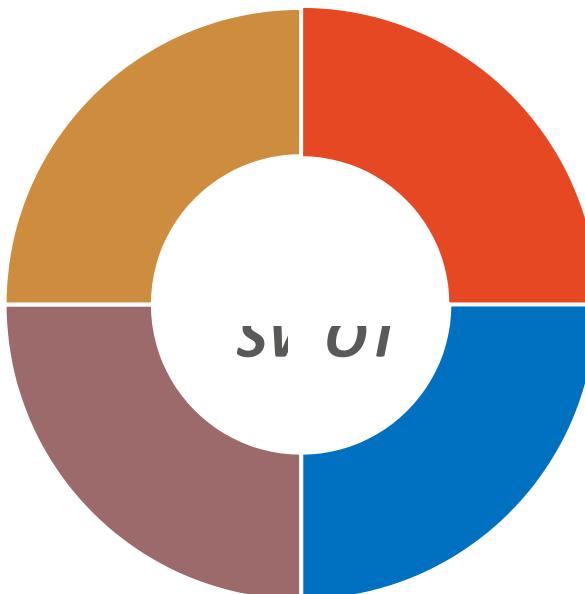
- Two rivers: Rappahannock and Potomac
- Location (Centrally located between Northern Neck and Fredericksburg)
- Dahlgren's Economic Impact
- Caledon State Park
- Existing trail network

### WEAKNESSES

- Zoning
- Road Signage
- Limited parking in public spaces
- Playing fields (Public and Private)
- Limited venues for gatherings
- County-wide online presence
- Tourism Marketing efforts

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Regional Collaboration
- Historical Story Telling
- Sports Tourism
- Collaboration spaces (Indoor or Outdoor)
- Business tourism
- Expansion
- Agritourism
- Riverfront development



### THREATS

- NIMBY Mindset
- Federal spending dependency
- COVID-19
- State and regional competition

## Strategic Anchors

**Vision:** King George County, a proud tourism community at the convergence of history, technology, and nature.

**Mission:** Promote King George as the gathering location for all by offering experiences through collaboration, creativity, and convenience.

### Reputation:

- **Welcoming:** King George should strive to be a community that embraces its visitors and makes an effort to have them leave with an impactful and positive experience.
- **Inclusive:** King George should embrace all visitors from all backgrounds and work to create experiences for all families and individuals.
- **Authentic:** King George should promote its traditions and work to create new ones that embody its existing residents and their interests.
- **Unique:** King George should tell the various stories from its distinguished history and embrace the historical significance of technological advancements and civil triumphs.

## Strategic Objectives

### Objective #1

#### Outdoor Recreational Product Development

- Develop tourism products/assets by leveraging King George's strategic location and outdoor recreational assets.
  - History and Heritage – King George's abundance of historical landmarks that range from indigenous peoples, unique colonial and Civil War history, civil rights, African

American, military, maritime/watermen, and farm history can be represented throughout the multiple locations and sites within the county.

- **Desired Outcomes**

- Develop driving tours focused on historical landmarks and unique assets.
- Partner with local, regional, and State organizations to develop programs that increase visitors to the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers.
- Develop hiking or biking activities that increase visitors to existing trail systems.

## Objective #2

### Sports Tourism Recruitment

- Partner with the Parks and Recreational Department to identify existing or new sites near the county's commercial areas to attract sports tourism. Develop a marketing strategy centered around recruiting state, regional, and national sports leagues, tournaments, and races to be hosted in the county.
  - **Team Sports** – King George will benefit from the opening of the new Harry Nice/Middleton Bridge that will expand from two lanes to four. This will create a major increase in traffic flow through the county. In tandem with the county's strategic location on the Virginia and Maryland state-line, this is an ideal place to host sporting events, such as Little League Baseball/Softball tournaments, Soccer tournaments, and a-like.
  - **Races** – Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail is a 16-mile trail that follows the route of the 1940s Dahlgren Branch line. Collaborate with local organizations to promote events that attract trail runners to the county to experience the trail. Additionally, Caledon State Park has miles of trails that can be promoted for biking and trail running that may draw visitors to the county.
- Tournaments** - King George has three marinas located on the Potomac River and two boat landings located on the Rappahannock River. Collaborate with existing marina owners and work to recruit water-centric activity leagues to host tournaments within the county.

- **Desired Outcomes**

- Recruit team sports and water tournaments to the county.

- Work with existing race organizers to increase the number of runners for current races.
- Develop scalable new races that attract new markets and visitors to the county.

## Objective #3

### Regional Collaboration

- Tourism is regional in nature; tourists and visitors travel to central locations to enjoy what an area offers. King George is centrally located between multiple regional tourism assets. The county should encourage and collaborate with regional neighbors such as the City of Fredericksburg, Town of Colonial Beach, Caroline, Charles, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Westmoreland Counties.
  - Areas of Interest: Sports Tourism, Historical Tours, Joint Marketing Campaigns, Itinerary Development.

#### **Desired Outcomes**

- Work with neighboring localities to develop regional itineraries that include tourism locations in King George County.
- Partner with neighboring localities on joint marketing campaigns that promote county tourism assets.



## Objective #4

### Historical Education and Story Telling

- King George has very unique tourism assets; Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail, Caledon State Park, Ralph Bunche High School, and significant Naval Research and Development history. These assets, among others, will require educational storytelling to preserve their impact on the county, state, and in some cases, the Nation.
- **Desired Outcomes**

- Partner with the various nonprofit groups that represent these assets to develop multichannel educational marketing materials and information sessions that raise the overall knowledge of the County's history.
- Collaborate with regional organizations and various government agencies to create multichannel educational marketing pieces that appeal to the County's target markets.



## Objective #5

### Virginia Tourism Corporation Marketing and Tourism Development programs

- The Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) has multiple marketing and partnership programs that can be leveraged to assist in the marketing and development of destination-type tourism experiences for King George County.
- **Desired Outcomes**
  - Work with the VTC's destination development specialists to develop local itineraries for tourists to the County.
  - Identify opportunities to leverage VTC's development programs to create or enhance existing tourism assets.
  - Utilize VTC's Marketing Leverage program to amplify our marketing impact.

## Objective #6

### Business Tourism

- Vineyards, bed & breakfasts, marinas, farmers markets, and restaurants are priority amenities that draw outside visitors and tourists to King George. Actively promote and market these businesses with the added benefit that they improve the overall quality of life for existing residents and draw new visitors to the County.
- **Desired Outcomes**
  - Work with the Economic Development Authority and Community Development Department to attract new tourism businesses to the County and work to expand existing businesses.

- Conduct educational information sessions to educate tourism businesses within the county.
- Monitor tourism industry trends and share educational opportunities with tourism businesses on new marketing and promotional activity.
- Collaborate with existing tourism businesses on county-wide tourism marketing campaigns and itineraries. Ex: WanderLove Itineraries.

## Objective #7

### Marketing Content and Materials

- Develop marketing materials which should include videos, photographs, infographics, brochures, and giveaways that enhance awareness of the county.
- **Desired Outcomes**
  - Develop digital marketing campaigns that highlight the county's outdoor recreational assets and historical significance.
  - Develop print materials that assist tourists visiting the county with locating additional places of interest.
  - Promote the county from a quality of life perspective that will enhance the county's image as a place to live, work and play.

## Objective #8

### Tourism Events

- Work with event planners and organizations to host high-quality events that draw visitors within a six-hour drive-time to visit the county. Utilize the TAC applications to support and sponsor events that will draw visitors to the county.
- **Desired Outcomes**
  - Work with the appropriate county departments to create a Special Event Permit to standardize a nonexistent process for filming, festivals, sporting events, etc.
  - Create a standardization of reporting and metrics for TAC-funded events and activities.



## Objective #9

### Marketing Spending and Metrics

- Establish a baseline of marketing and success metrics.
- **Desired Outcomes**
  - Create quarterly marketing reports to be reviewed and discussed by the TAC to identify insights and strategies to improve and amplify spending.
  - Establish success metrics centered around Caledon and Dahlgren Heritage Railroad Trail visitors, expenditures, occupancy tax revenues, and tourism employment.

## Objective #10

### River Access

- Look for opportunities to increase water access points for recreational activities and boating access.
- **Desired Outcomes**
  - Work with residents, state, and Federal agencies to expand access to the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers.
  - Research state and Federal funding opportunities to improve amenities for existing locations.

## 5. MARKETING PLAN

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### Target Markets:

- Outdoor Recreation
- Events
- History Lovers: Dahlgren/Military, Colonial, Native American, Civil War

### Market Segmentation:

- Adult and youth sports tourism, outdoor recreation, friends and family visitors, historical, business travelers (Dahlgren)

### Target Tourist Demographics:

- Outdoor Recreationist
  - Ages 25-64
  - Household Income above 100k
  - Lives within six-hour drive time
- Families
  - Household Incomes above 100k
  - Ages 25 -54
  - Lives in the Mid-Atlantic Region and has traveled within the past twelve months
- Business Travelers
  - NSF Dahlgren visitors
  - Household Income above 100k
  - Ages 25 – 44

### Target Geographical Markets:

- Within 6-to-8 hour drive time
  - In-State: Richmond, Washington D.C. Metropolitan Statistical Area, Fredericksburg, Hampton Roads
  - Out of State: North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, New York, Florida

## **Positioning:**

- Tell the story of King George through the lens of outdoor recreation.
- Learn about authentic King George history and have multicultural experiences at our unique outdoor assets.
- Experience outdoor and riverfront adventures on the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers.
- Experience a quiet and peaceful get-a-way that provides a sense of tranquility for visitors and tourists.

## **Marketing Activities:**

- Digital Media advertising (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Visit King George Website, SEO, Blogging, Online Magazines, Radio, Brochures, Target Market Websites)
- Seminars, Webinars, In-person Classes
- Joint advertising with other localities
- Fixed signage (print and digital)
- Sponsor community events
- Free marketing materials at county engagements

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### **King George County Board of Supervisors**

Cathy Binder – Shiloh District Supervisor

Terence “TC” Collins – James Monroe Supervisor

Annie Cupka – At-Large Supervisor

Richard Granger – James Madison District Supervisor

Jeff Stonehill – Dahlgren District Supervisor

### **Staff**

Christopher Miller – County Administrator

Kelly Lackey – County Attorney

Nicholas Minor - Director of Economic Development and Tourism

Chris Clarke – Director of Parks and Recreation

Kimberly Wilson – Economic Development Specialist

Roan Grapes – Administrative Assistant

### **Tourism Advisory Committee**

Bob Baird (Chair)

Jeron Hayes (Vice-Chair)

Charlotte Strauss

David Hall

Warren Veazey

Lisa Caswell

Becky Stewart

### **Regional Partners**

Lisa Logan – Stafford County

Kathy Beard – Caroline County

Suzan French Gennace – Colonial Beach/Flack Shack LLC.

Lisa Hull – Northern Neck Tourism

### **Industry Contributors**

Christina Burroughs - Sassafras Creations

Rick Gump - Backporch Vineyard

Ed Jones - Dahlgren Heritage Foundation

## 7. APPENDIX

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### **Tourism Advisory Committee**

**Agritourism** – Promotes and provides insight on agritourism activities.

**Arts and Events** – Promotes and provides insight on events and culturally significant activities.

**Civic Groups** – Promotes and provides insights on policy and community-based tourism activities.

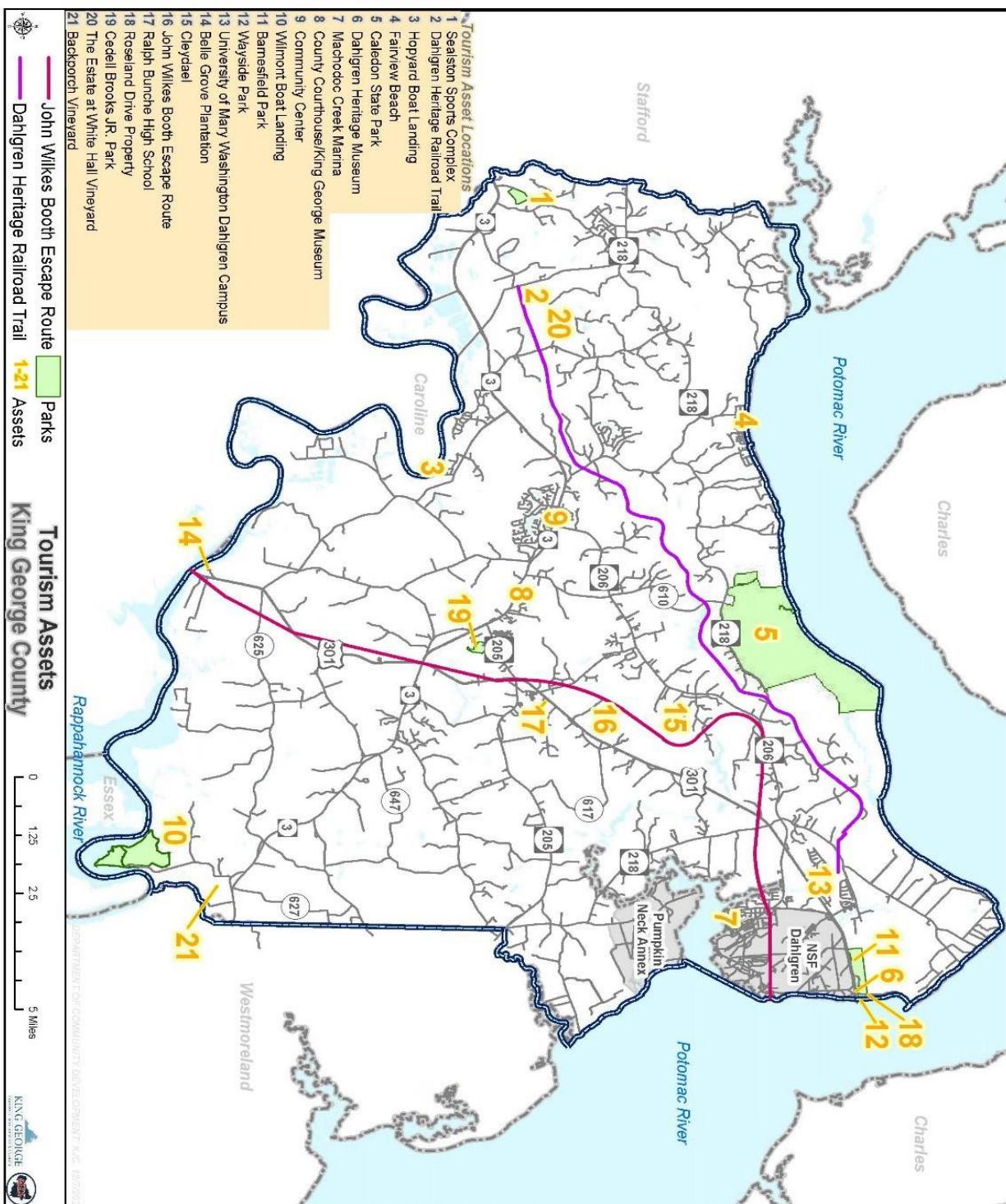
**History** – Promotes and provides insight on historical tourism assets and activities.

**Hotels and Lodging** – Promotes and provides insights on the county's hotel and lodging industry.

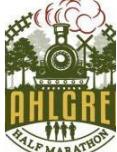
**Outdoor Recreation** – Promotes and provides insight on outdoor recreation and sports tourism activities.

**Marketing and Promotion** – Provides insight on best practices of marketing and promotion for tourism activities.

## Tourism Assets



## Annual Events



### Dahlgren Trail Half-Marathon

- Mid-February
- Half marathon



### Sheetz to Sheetz Run

- Early to Mid-March



### King George County Farmers Market

- Mid-April through October



### Dirty Lion Mud-Run

- Mid to Late June



### Independence Day Celebration

- Early July



### Dahlgren Heritage 50k / 3H Trail Half Marathon

- First Saturday in August



### Jazz in the Country Festival

- Mid to Late August



### Belle Grove Plantation Spirits Festival

- Early to Mid-September



### King George Fall Festival

- Second Saturday in October



### Ainsley's Angels Annual Hopyard's Spirit Of Inclusion 5K

- Late October



### Caledon Arts and Wine Festival

- First weekend in November



### King George Christmas Tree Lighting

- First Sunday in December

## Glossary of Terms

**Agritourism** - any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, wineries, ranching, historical, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions.

**Barnesfield Park** – County park with two picnic shelters, playground, outside basketball court, three softball fields, little league field, two multi-purpose fields, concession stand, bathrooms, horseshoes and exercise trails.

**Belle Grove Plantation** – Southern plantation bed and breakfast known for being James Madison's Boyhood home.

**Business Tourism** – tourism as it relates to businesses as the primary draw of tourists to an area. Examples: restaurants, breweries, wineries, bed and breakfasts, marinas, or farmers markets.

**Business Travelers** – visitors to an area to attend meetings, conferences, exhibitions and training.

**Caledon State Park** - 2,579-acre state park located in King George, Virginia. The property was initially owned by the Alexander brothers, founders of the city of Alexandria, and was established in 1659 as Caledon Plantation. Ownership passed, in 1974, to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**Cedell Brooks, Jr. Park** - County Park with picnic shelters and multiple baseball fields located in the Shiloh district of King George County.

**Cleydael** - also known as Quarter Neck, is a historic home located near Weedonville, King George County, Virginia.

**Community Center** – citizen meeting hall.

**County Courthouse / Museum** – County's historical museum and research center.

**Dahlgren Heritage Museum** - operated by the Dahlgren Heritage Foundation to preserve and promote the history, traditions, heritage, and culture of the U.S. Navy at Dahlgren, Virginia, and the surrounding community.

**Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail** - a trail that follows an old railroad bed in King George County, Virginia.

**Drive-Time** - the time or estimated time to drive between two points or to one's destination.

**Fairview Beach** – beach community with a marina located on the Potomac River.

**Focus Group** - demographically diverse group of people assembled to participate in a guided discussion about a particular product before it is launched.

**Hopyard Landing** – publicly owned boat launch on the Rappahannock River.

**John Wilkes Booth Escape Trail** - Interpretative signs that follow the escape route of John Wilkes Booth

**Machodoc Creek Marina** - full-service marina on Machodoc Creek with Potomac River access.

**Marketing Campaign** - an organized course of action to promote and sell a product or service.

**Marketing Plan** - operational document that demonstrates how an organization is planning to use advertising and outreach to target a specific market.

**Marketing Segmentation** - process of dividing a broad consumer or business market, normally consisting of existing and potential customers, into sub-groups of consumers based on some type of shared characteristics.

**Metrics** - a method of measuring something, or the results obtained from this.

**Mission Statement** - a formal summary of the aims and values of a company/organization.

**Multi-Channel** - use of several media channels for spreading marketing messages.

**Outdoor Recreation** - outdoor activity refers to recreation engaged in out of doors, most commonly in natural settings.

**Positioning** - promote a product, service, or business within a particular sector of a market, or as the fulfillment of that sector's specific requirements.

**Potomac River** - river within the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States that flows from the Potomac Highlands into the Chesapeake Bay. The river is approximately 405 miles long.

**Product Development** - bringing a new product to market, renewing an existing product or introducing a product in a new market.

**Rappahannock River** - river in eastern Virginia, in the United States, approximately 195 miles in length.

**Ralph Bunche High School** - school constructed in 1949 as a result of Civil Action 631 to provide "separate but equal" education for African American students.

**Roseland Drive** - publicly held, riverfront property located on the Potomac River.

**Sealston Sports Complex** - County Park with picnic shelters and multiple ball fields located in the James Madison district.

**SEO** - Search Engine Optimization

**Sports Tourism** - refers to travel which involves either observing or participating in a sporting event while staying apart from the tourists' usual environment.

**Strategic Anchors** - core values used in the decision-making process.

**Strategic Objectives** - broad statements of direction that create a bridge from your vision to the strategic goals.

**Strategic Plan** - an organization's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy.

**SWOT Analysis** - a study undertaken by an organization to identify its internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as its external opportunities and threats.

**TAC** - Tourism Advisory Committee

**TAC Application** - Tourism Advisory Committee Application, funding application funded by the county's occupancy tax.

**Target Markets** - a group of people with some shared characteristics that the County has identified as potential customers for its products.

**University of Mary Washington Dahlgren** - multi-institution post-graduate center for education and research.

**Vision Statement** - an inspirational statement of an idealistic emotional future of a group.

**VTC** - Virginia Tourism Corporation

**Wayside Park** - county park located on the Potomac River in the Dahlgren district.

**Wilmont Landing** - boat launch on the Rappahannock River.