



High Point

Destination Strategic Plan

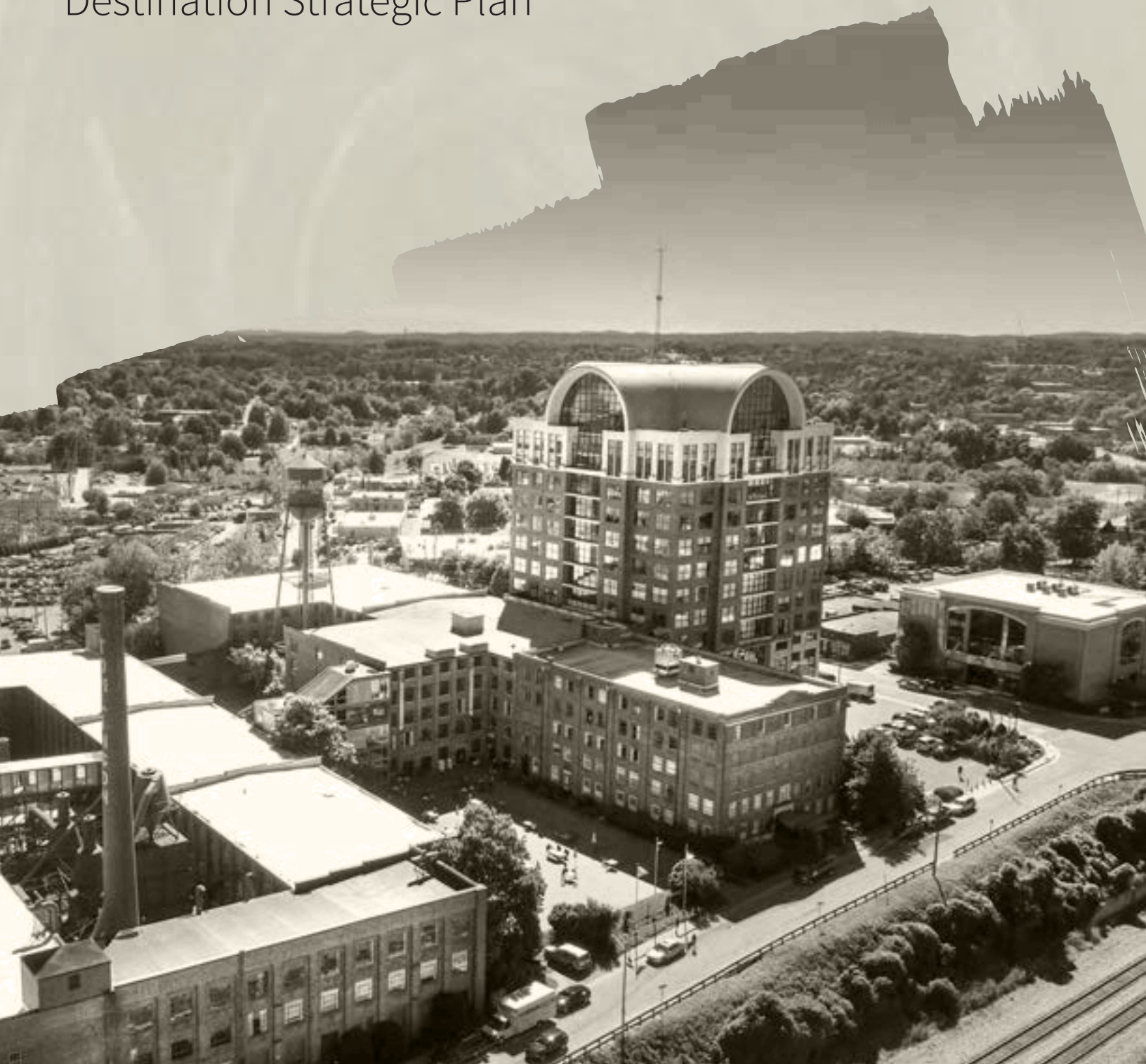




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JLL Tourism & Destinations Practice

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Section 1:

Executive Summary



Twice a year High Point, North Carolina becomes the epicenter of the home furnishings industry as the 110-year old High Point Market (“the Market”) envelops the city. Attracting more than 75,000 guests, the Market has branded High Point as the destination for furniture and serves as its key attractor for overnight visitors.

Recognizing the potential to grow its hospitality sector beyond the semi-annual Market and to use its strong quality of place to attract visitors, the High Point Convention and Visitors Bureau (HPCVB) partnered with JLL’s Global Tourism and Destinations Advisory team to craft this Destination Strategic Plan as a road-map to grow visitation year-round to the City.



Through a year-long process that included soliciting stakeholder input, researching best practices and taking an objective look at High Point’s destination attributes, JLL worked with the HPCVB staff, leadership, and destination partners to:

- Understand the current state of visitation to High Point,
- Set a realistic future vision for High Point as a visitor destination;
- Identify gaps that are impeding High Point from being a more competitive destination for visitors across all channels, and
- Develop a holistic strategy for how High Point can grow as a destination and encourage greater number of overnight visitors and visitor spending.



The resulting Destination Strategic Plan summarizes the key findings and the recommendations applied to High Point as a City, community, economic development catalyst and ultimately as a visitor destination. It sets forth recommendations for High Point to align the community around destination development opportunities and—together—to strengthen the City’s destination assets. Because destination development is part of the community’s overall economic framework, several of the recommendations set forth apply not only to the HPCVB, but also to the City of High Point and the area’s many destination partners.

The recommendations call on the HPCVB and the City to take a fresh look at the destination while reassessing the role and responsibilities of its

destination marketing organization (DMO). This Plan looks beyond marketing and advertising tactics and considers product development and other long-term investments in the City’s tourism assets. The Destination Strategic Plan drills deep into the assets and brand that differentiate High Point as a community and a place to visit.

The Destination Strategic Plan for High Point proposes a set of strategic recommendations that involve a wide variety of individuals and organizations. The recommendations take a holistic approach to destination development and identify product improvement and organizational opportunities. To varying degrees, each recommendation involves foundational changes that must be made to address current challenges or gaps; immediate (or short-term) initiatives to take advantage of current opportunities or set the tone for success; and longer-term initiatives and investments to develop High Point as a destination.



Foundational

Longer-term strategies that help High Point mitigate challenges and strengthen the foundations of the City’s tourism infrastructure and assets



Immediate

Key short-term strategies that will set the tone for future success. These strategies also require immediate action to actualize the ongoing opportunity.



Long-term

Destination development needs that require several years of investment and partnership throughout the City before producing noticeable returns on visitation. High Point must begin to take action on these recommendations while pursuing the Foundational and Immediate initiatives.

High Point Destination Strategic Plan: Key Elements

- Distinctive opportunities that position High Point against competitors
- Collaborative offerings that connect High Point to neighboring destinations
- Synergies and alliances across the community to foster success and improvement
- Development needs and options that help transition the destination to attract targeted visitors year-round
- Comparatives to other communities that faced similar traits, opportunities, and challenges
- Aspirational goals and objectives that provide inspiration for accomplishments with clear metrics for success



Organizational Change

Additionally, the Destination Strategic Plan recommends a series of organizational changes that will position the HPCVB to take on a broader range of roles and responsibilities and better lead implementation of the Plan. As the DMO for the City, the HPCVB will be at the core of several of the initiatives. The HPCVB’s role as the area’s DMO requires the organization to actively lead, facilitate, and convene activities to implement the recommendations. To accomplish this, the HPCVB’s organizational structure should change, and investment decisions will need to be re-prioritized. Going forward, the HPCVB will have a greater role in developing experiences and will venture beyond the scope of a traditional DMO. The HPCVB of the future will manage the destination holistically and measure success based on the impact of the collaborative strategic initiatives recommended within the Plan versus purely marketing outcomes.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

In our work to partner with DMOs to build strategies to strengthen their destinations, JLL has identified three common success factors in destination strategic planning:

- Destination Strategic Plans are not written in past-tense. Strategic planning requires future vision and a keen eye focused on solving needs and fulfilling opportunities.
- Destination Strategic Plans are not written in a vacuum. Stakeholder input must be inclusive and multi-dimensional. Recommendations are guided by combining the perspective of local stakeholders with the need for differentiation from competitors.
- Destination Strategic Plans are not written for a single, individual organization. Implementation requires partnerships, collaborative support, and trust among all partners.

Foundations to Build Upon

While the High Point Market has built an international furniture brand for the City, High Point as a destination encompasses much more. Throughout the years, the City has nurtured and grown a strong quality of place that provides amenities to residents and visitors, alike.

High Point possesses five destination attributes that, if nurtured and leveraged correctly, will continue to set the destination apart and will contribute to the success of long-term initiatives to grow High Point’s competitiveness to attract visitors. To be successful in executing the recommendations in this Plan, High Point needs to address each of these foundational attributes. Strengthening them and shifting the destination’s focus or approach to them will improve High Point’s positioning as a visitor destination.

- **Home Furnishings Brand**

High Point must maintain and actively grow its solid base as the “Home Furnishings Capital of World.” The City should continue to adapt its traditional manufacturing legacy towards a modern furniture offering that builds on distinctive creative, design-based activities, exposition, and retail. The ability to leverage the home furnishings brand in attracting visitors is a key strategy within the Plan. Tourism is the delivery mechanism for this new industrial adaptation.

- **Events**

Special events and festivals can be leveraged, re-imagined, or created to encourage visitation during shoulder or off-season periods. A destination-oriented events strategy can help drive immediate results that showcase the High Point’s forward momentum. By cultivating and encouraging the development of new events and expanding selected current events, High Point can target audiences with its specialized offerings at times of the year where business needs are most prominent.

- **High Point University (HPU)**

High Point University’s investments provide a constant sign of the revitalization taking place in the community. The tourism sector benefits from the City’s classification as a “college town,” particularly through HPU’s unmatched life-skills curricula. Additionally, HPU-related events provide a solid base for year-round calendar management. College towns are a great benchmark for ideas and comparatives as High Point grows its destination. Capitalizing on the opportunities presented the City’s growing university will pay dividends in the future.

- **Leverage and Link to Downtown**

Dense, urban downtowns routinely provide a concentration of visitor-oriented offerings such as retail, restaurants, and recreation. Conversely, High Point’s downtown has evolved primarily to serve the needs of the Market and its various connected showrooms. To fill the gap, other districts in High Point emerged, adding more traditional, non-Market amenities and services. In addition to continuing to address the downtown’s product needs, High Point needs to reassess how downtown can interact with these active districts. Solidifying connectivity to the districts is an important priority of the Plan.

- **Greensboro and Guilford County**

High Point’s connection to other parts of North Carolina’s Triad (specifically Greensboro and the rest of Guilford County) is an easily overlooked competitive advantage. Shared funding streams from the county’s bed tax, intertwined infrastructure such as rail, roads and airlift, and a connected base of regional residents are a significant basis for future partnerships that will elevate tourism in High Point. There is an opportunity to leverage ongoing partnerships to align with this strategy.

Transitions to Increase Visitation

High Point is a unique destination shaped by a rich industrial history. It is also a destination in transition. For much of the past, the City and its brand were closely tied with furniture manufacturing, hosiery, and the other related industries. Across its wide and varied history, High Point prospered based on its unique industrial strengths. Intersections of railways and plank roadways sparked industrial ventures into furniture and hosiery. These industries have defined the area and—especially in the case of the furniture industry--have garnered the City world-wide renown.

While these industries and their legacies are still an integral part of the High Point brand, the City has evolved in other directions. As the community has evolved from manufacturing into design and innovation-powered industries, it has also grown and nurtured a quality of place that has attracted residents and visitors alike. The transformation of HPU has impacted the City, attracting students and extending High Point’s brand beyond home furnishings.

This Destination Strategic Plan recognizes the power of the legacy industries upon which the City was built, but also recognizes that High Point has evolved. The recommendations and priorities offered herein challenge the City to leverage its manufacturing past, but embrace its new strengths and opportunities in furniture design and higher education to further evolve the destination and attract different visitor audiences. Together, the past and current strengths provide a strong framework around which High Point can enhance itself as a visitor destination.



Alignment with High Point’s Overall Vision

The High Point Destination Strategic Plan seeks to prescribe a vision and goals for building High Point into a year-round visitor destination with an actionable strategy that guides the community’s focus, work, and priorities. The Plan was crafted through a collaborative effort led by the HPCVB that intentionally sought to engage a range of stakeholders in the community. The recommendations and priorities are influenced by stakeholder feedback obtained from interviews and focus groups and a digital stakeholder survey. It is aligned with other efforts within the City that look to make High Point a place to visit, live, and work.

High Point’s Future Tourism Destination Strategic Plan Mission

To shape High Point’s future as a prosperous and attractive visitor destination through targeted marketing and investments in destination assets

High Point’s Future Tourism Destination Strategic Plan Vision

Build upon High Point’s reputation as the Home Furnishings Capital of the World™ and the home of a high-growth university to grow as a visitor destination

How High Point Will Get There

- Focus on targeted audiences and strengths
- Organizational changes within HPCVB to catalyze activity and support the plan
- Investments in destination development
- Community alignment around High Point’s future destination vision

Priority Focus Areas

To evolve High Point into a year-round destination, the HPCVB and its destination partners must agree upon the updated destination vision and maintain a keen focus on solving destination needs and fulfilling opportunities. While many of the HPCVB’s and destination partners’ current activities will remain unchanged, other efforts must be more targeted around particular visitor audiences if the City is to increase year-round visitation. As noted above, this Destination Strategic Plan was not written for an individual organization. Rather, successful implementation around the below priorities and focus areas requires partnerships, collaborative support and trust.

Section 3 details the priority focus areas and recommendations of the Destination Strategic Plan. The HPCVB’s role will be different for each of the priorities.

| Programming and Execution | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elevating the Home Furnishings Brand• Targeting Event-based Business• Linking High Point’s “Districts” | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Servicing Sports and Tourism Conferences• Refining Targets for the Congdon Events Center |
| Partnership and Alignment | Support and Advocacy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leveraging High Point University• Connecting to Greensboro and Guilford County | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-imagining “Downtown” |

African American Heritage



Section 2:

A Destination in Transition

High Point must “sell” itself differently and develop tourism product that leverages its assets and its unique value proposition.

Across its wide and varied history, High Point prospered based on its unique industrial strengths. High Point’s brand as a destination developed in conjunction with these industry strengths. Just as it became the main “brand” of the City, the furniture industry was—and still is—a strong demand driver for the City’s tourism industry. While the furniture industry was the start of High Point’s tourism industry, there are opportunities to develop additional demand drivers going forward.

The HPCVB recognizes the power of the legacy industries upon which the City was built, but also recognizes that High Point has evolved. Living in the dual-pronged shadow of Winston Salem and Greensboro, High Point added a suburban culture to its personality as the age of auto travel blossomed. Global outsourcing and industrial change forced the City to re-invent itself; still leveraging its manufacturing past, but embracing its new strengths in design and higher education.

Together, the past and current strengths provide a strong framework around which High Point can carve a new visitor destination structure.

More than a Typical Destination

High Point is not a traditional tourism destination that builds its travel-based fortune on the backs of leisure vacationers and convention-goers. High Point is a unique destination with unique perspectives and potential that is mostly connected to the furniture industry. New amenities are emerging to add greater dimension to the destination.

High Point as a destination is crafted around the furniture industry and the world-renowned High Point Market that is held semi-annually downtown. Other demand generators are event-based tourism and High Point University. Because the City is not a traditional destination that relies on traditional attractors like museums, amusements, resorts or event venues, High Point must “sell” itself differently and develop tourism product that leverages its assets and its unique value proposition.

High Point Current State

High Point is the ninth most populous city in North Carolina with nearly 110,000 residents, similar in size to Cary, Wilmington, Greenville, Asheville, and Concord. Similar to High Point’s proximity to both Winston-Salem and Greensboro, Cary and Concord neighbor major metropolitan leaders (i.e., Raleigh and Charlotte, respectively). Wilmington, Greenville, and Asheville are home to universities, but only Greenville is truly defined by its home university. Wilmington, Asheville, and Concord have distinctive economic dependence on the tourism industry.

High Point has traits of each of the above. High Point neighbors both the third (Greensboro) and the fifth (Winston-Salem) largest cities in the state. High Point is home to a university that shares its name. High Point has an economic dependence on specific tourism. But High Point’s tourism product differs from Asheville, Concord, Wilmington, or virtually any other community for that matter. The dramatic importance of the home furnishings industry on High Point’s destination makes it difficult to compare the City with other destinations. Even its closest furniture-related competitor, Hickory (with a much smaller population 40,000), cannot begin to assemble a comparative attribute that matches either the available magnitude of furniture stores or the monstrous expanse of showroom exhibition space. Hence, properly benchmarking High Point against other destinations requires creative analysis.

High Point, like other destinations in transition, lacks the appeal and product mix for traditional leisure or large-scale convention-related travel.

WHO VISITS HIGH POINT?

Visitors to High Point are motivated by one of several extremely specific types of trip purpose associated with one of the following:

- Home Furnishings
- High Point University
- Sports
- Events
- Visiting Friends and Relatives
- Conferences & Meetings
- Other/Business

Is High Point a Partial Legacy City?

“Legacy Cities” are communities that have an ongoing linkage to their past. Cities like Akron, Ohio; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; or Syracuse, New York were all industrial epicenters prior to a wave of global outsourcing that changed the face of many manufacturing-based communities beginning in the mid 1960s. Over those years, the emotional strain of industrial exodus prompted population migration, wealth reduction and dependency on social service programs.

Given these difficult transitions, Legacy Cities have a tendency to be handcuffed by their past. Lost or changed industrial sectors permeate the destination’s brand, while scarring the perceptions and attitudes of local residents.

Nevertheless, Legacy Cities can be highly resilient. The industries that once defined towns have evolved, using the foundations of their past strengths as a springboard to re-invent themselves for 21st century markets. This strong history and sense of place are used to shape the Legacy Cities as destinations and serve as springboards to shaping their destination products. The key with Legacy Cities is reassessing the past context of the area’s industrial presence into a current economic opportunity.

High Point has elements of a legacy city. The hosiery industry is no longer prevalent. The furniture industry has undergone tremendous change, moving from manufacturing case goods to creative design of the “fashion” of home furnishings. Higher Education has emerged as a critical component of the region’s economy, while the connectivity to the Triad and successes in advanced manufacturing, automotive industries, aviation and distribution steadily grew more pronounced.

High Point must shed the remaining stigma of lost industry and focus on those aspects of its past it can leverage and build upon. Stated simply, it should celebrate all of the innovation and opportunity that still exists with the greater furniture industry.



EXAMPLE: AKRON, OHIO

Akron, Ohio is a strong example of a city whose past provides a context for the future. Akronicity acknowledges that the community has a rich heritage built on its manufacturing foundations.



EXAMPLE: LOUISVILLE, KY

Louisville, Kentucky is an example of a city that embraced a regional brand as a base for its future. Louisville’s Bourbonism embraces its region’s history and leverages it to show its aspirations as a “craft” economy and to open the door to other reasons to visit.

Section 3:

Priorities + Recommendations

To further strengthen itself as a destination, High Point must take a holistic approach that mitigates current challenges while building the assets and organizational structure to transform the destination.

Three-pronged Approach

The Destination Strategic Plan identifies eight priorities for High Point as the world’s home furnishings destination while developing new assets and programming that provide greater depth to the current High Point visitor experience.

To reach this goal, High Point must strengthen and leverage the City’s strong quality of place and pursue a three-pronged approach:

- **Foundational:** Undertake longer-term strategies that help High Point mitigate challenges and strengthen the foundations of the City’s tourism infrastructure and assets;
- **Immediate Opportunity:** Pursue key short-term strategies that will set the tone for future success. These strategies also require immediate action to actualize the ongoing direction opportunity;
- **Long-term:** Invest in destination development needs that require several years of investment and partnership throughout the City before producing noticeable returns on visitation. High Point must begin to take action on these recommendations while pursuing the Foundational and Immediate initiatives. .

To varying degrees, each of the priorities recommended in the Plan contain the above three elements and together help High Point capture immediate opportunities while building the foundation to support long-term success.

The following pages briefly summarize each of the priorities. More detail discussion of how High Point can act on the priorities is included in the Appendix

Elevating the Home Furnishings Brand

High Point must maintain and actively grow its solid base as the “Home Furnishings Capital of World.” The City should continue to adapt its traditional manufacturing legacy towards a modern furniture offering that builds on distinctive creative, design-based activities, exposition and retail.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- Maintain and actively grow High Point’s solid base as the “Home Furnishings Capital of World”
- Shift emphasis to the design aspects of furniture and servicing a broader business visitor base
- Pursue new markets while staying focused on the home furnishings market to fully develop and realize its potential
- Integrate the Furniture Hall of Fame as a destination asset based on its attraction/ attractor attributes



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- Shift from accommodating events and festivals to planned cultivation of event offerings
- Address market segments, calendar needs, and the sales process
- Continue to push events to potential guests through the website highpoint.org/events



Targeting Events

Special events and festivals can be leveraged or created to encourage visitation during under-performing times of the year. A destination-oriented events strategy can help drive immediate results that showcase High Point’s forward momentum. By cultivating and encouraging the development of new events, combined with the expansion of targeted current events, High Point can target audiences. This will require a shift in organizational focus and resources.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- Leverage the success of High Point University to extend the City’s brand as a “college town”
- Engage High Point University within the Destination Development leadership coalition
- Encourage and support development and investment at the university that impact the destination
- Maximize opportunities to leverage potential demand generators at High Point University

Leveraging High Point University

High Point University’s capital investments provide a constant sign of the revitalization taking place in the community. Tourism benefits from the City being recognized as a “college town,” particularly through the University’s focus on its unmatched life-skills curricula. HPU-related events provide a solid base for year-round calendar management. This includes exploring opportunities to leverage the educational focus to attract “thought leadership” to High Point.



Re-imagining Downtown

High Point’s downtown has evolved primarily to serve the needs of the High Point Market. The continued transformation of Downtown High Point is a delicate strategic process. Numerous organizations exist to transform downtown High Point into an “extraordinary and vibrant place to live, work, play and study” and visit.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- Rise above the current non-market atmosphere
- Nurture the development of demand drivers by incubating support amenities
- Connect to other parts of High Point
- Continue to deliver higher-quality visitor facing services
- Focus resources on supporting downtown development activity



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- Align tourism with regional economic development efforts
- Advocate as a region/County around Hotel Motel Tax issues and state issues that affect tourism
- Assemble a more organized and focused approach to air capacity
- Build a comprehensive and cohesive approach to regional event services during need periods

Connecting to the Regional Economy

High Point plays an important role as a regional player in the Triad. Shared funding streams from the county’s bed tax, intertwined infrastructure, and a connected base of regional residents is a significant basis for future partnerships that elevate tourism business for High Point.



Linking Downtown to Other Districts

With multiple areas of the community serving various commercial needs, High Point must invest in linking these districts to provide consistency in quality of experience, signage, customer service, and transportation.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- Implement wayfinding program to provide guidance and the framework for future linkages
- Employ street art engagements reflective of the furnishing industry’s heritage and ongoing innovation
- Conceptualize a trolley plan with initial implementation during key events



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- Concentrate on enhancing the visitor experience for existing events and conferences
- Reposition existing visitor services material to note High Point’s regional reach and ability to serve as one of several regional hosts
- For sports, find a niche and develop facilities to support that niche

Servicing Sports and Conferences

High Point currently does not offer the critical mass of sports, meetings and conference venues nor space necessary to effectively and consistently compete in venue-based event recruitment business. Until such venues and markets are developed, High Point can concentrate on its overall visitor experience for existing and near-term sports opportunities, meetings and conference business while pursuing longer-term steps to improve the product mix.



Planning for the Congdon Events Center

The proposed Congdon Events Center will address High Point’s need for an event and conference venue that is open for use year-round; however, work is required to adequately market the venue for potential users. This new asset will allow High Point to welcome a mix of convention, event and sports-related activity.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- Refine and prospect target markets that will fit the center and can hold their meeting/ event in High Point
- Connect conference services to key drivers for the region including education, industry, religious, and state associations
- Build an internal system with staff support for servicing the advanced booking needs of the center through targeted prospecting, sales, lead distribution, and conversion.

Implementing the Priorities

Section A of the appendix expands upon the above descriptions and outlines recommendations the HPCVB and destination partners throughout the community can take to strengthen and transform High Point as a destination within the given priorities. As applicable, recommendations around each priority are categorized using the foundational, immediate, and long-term actions needed to achieve success. Direct partnerships and product development needs are also highlighted.

Taken as a whole, successful implementation of the Destination Strategic Plan calls on the City of High Point, the HPCVB, and all of the City’s destination partners to take a different, collaborative approach to attracting potential overnight visitors to High Point.

Section 4 suggests an implementation approach for the HPCVB as the official DMO for the City.

QUALITY OF PLACE

Quality of place is the combination of the community’s sense of place with its quality of life. The various features, image, and persona that comprise the area’s quality of place make the community attractive to visit, live, work, play, and learn. In building its future destination, High Point should leverage and nurture its quality of place.



Section 4:

Impact on the HPCVB

As the destination emerges from this transition, the HPCVB must replace traditional advertising, outreach methods, and messages with strongly targeted and specific direct marketing approaches. The organization must also serve as a proactive advocate for needed destination developments to further the evolution of High Point into a well-rounded visitor destination.

High Point functions in a very different manner from other North Carolina destinations. Its destination product mix is (and can be) more creative-based and retail-focused than the state’s metropolitan cityscapes or resort communities. As such, destination marketing practices for High Point must also be creative and retail-focused. Because of the unique nature of the destination, the HPCVB needs to be focused not only on raising awareness of the destination, but also supporting efforts to cause visitors to visit and make a purchase while in the City.

Given the City’s need to strengthen its current destination product, traditional destination advertising will not work for High Point. For example, destination sales for group business cannot overcome product deficiencies and the lack of competitive or suitable convention or sports venue or a less than adequate full-service hotel product. The customers that High Point needs to reach for success conversion are out there, but they must be reached through direct engagement built around the distinctive offerings found in High Point.

HPCVB Transition

The HPCVB must shift away from being focused on traditional visitor related sales, marketing and services. The transformed organization will still engage in these activities when there is a clear target audience



DESTINATION STRATEGIC PLAN: Proposed New Mission & Vision

Mission: To collaboratively shape High Point’s future as a prosperous and attractive destination community.

Vision: High Point’s reputation as the Home Furnishings Capital of the World™ and the home of a high-growth university sets a solid base for the destination’s future.

and competitive experience, but the HPCVB’s top priority will be more centered on destination development implementation. This shift will require the HPCVB’s full attention.

Destination Leadership Coalition

Accomplishing the Destination Strategic Plan’s vision requires significant partnerships and alliances between key furniture and educational demand drivers, the municipality and various economic development entities. The HPCVB—through its governing board of directors and its professional staff—plays a truly crucial role in orchestrating and implementing the Plan. The organization relies on partnerships, funding, and strategic guidance from a wide range of organization and entities including but not limited to:

- Guilford County
- City of High Point
- High Point Market Authority
- High Point University
- Business High Point Chamber of Commerce

The Plan incorporates substantial new destination development, new marketing focus and targeted visitor services. Currently, each of the City’s above destination partners is focused on pursuing their own individual programs of work. Going forward the collective work must be combined to enhance High Point as a visitor destination. To this end, HPCVB should advocate for and develop a destination leadership coalition that adopts the destination vision, captures each organization’s role in pursuing the collaborative vision and monitors the various strides pursued towards that vision.

PARADIGM SHIFT

Replace traditional advertising and outreach methods and messages with strongly targeted and very specific direct marketing approaches.



Impact on HPCVB

The Priorities included in the Destination Strategic Plan suggest initiatives and actions where partners, stakeholders, and organizations involved with nurturing High Point’s visitor economy can and should be involved. The Priorities will have both direct and indirect impacts on increasing overnight visitation.

The HPCVB will lead some of the initiatives and, in others, will be an advocate or coordinator of activity. The HPCVB will be key in continuing to market the destination, but with a more strategic focus and targeted messaging to key audiences. The organization will also serve as an advocate for destination development investments--using the Priorities set forth in this Plan as the basis for such recommendations.

The Appendix details ways that HPCVB and the destination partners can implement and make progress on the identified Priorities. Over the life of the Destination Strategic Plan’s implementation, various partners will need to be involved in different initiatives that continue to build High Point as a visitor destination. The HPCVB will be involved in many of these initiatives in some way; similarly, City leadership and partner organizations must work collaboratively with the HPCVB on areas where their involvement and/or leadership moves these Priorities and subsequent recommendations forward.

Impact on HPCVB Budget

Implementation of the Destination Strategic Plan’s recommendations requires restructuring of the HPCVB budget. For example, the destination development programs largely replace current sales and marketing initiatives that pursue the traditional leisure travel or meeting planner markets. Additionally within the Destination Strategic Plan, partnerships play a different role in the organizational make-up of HPCVB. Past efforts to recruit members and sponsors were focused on revenue generation to support

the overall destination marketing effort. Partnership development efforts of the future should be aligned with the strategic priorities of the organization. Targeted sponsorship development around the furniture and design initiatives builds investment and programming support for the direction.

Events. Events represent another budget area that requires a shift in resource allocation. While not necessarily managed directly within the HPCVB, the organization will be more involved in advising and providing a variety of support to current and future events. Event priorities need to be assembled and event producers need to be lined-up to pursue the needed event enhancements. These priorities can be outlined by the existing HPCVB Events committee, but investment should be considered from other resources. Once the investment source is identified, an event grant program should be implemented. The event matrix offered in the Appendix can serve as the key decision-making tool for scoring events against their ability to drive overnight visitors to the community.

Destination Development. Larger-scale destination development investments are part of the long-range portion of this plan. The President and Board leadership of the HPCVB should begin working directly with City of High Point officials, local developers, High Point University, and Guilford County to prioritize destination development opportunities and future funding options. Creating a dedicated funding stream for physical destination development initiatives allows High Point to collaboratively build a more diverse destination offering. As a destination-in-transition, High Point is focused on building destination assets including BB&T Point, the High Point Children’s Museum and the Congdon Events Center. These products will take time, investment, realistic market perspective, and coordinating amenities/services to be successful. This implementation will require new grant making, funding programs, and direct engagement to support current and future developers.

Organizational/Staffing Considerations

The implementation of the staffing structure around this Destination Strategic Plan depends is focused on two critical areas needed for success:

- Interfacing with other organizations for developing and strengthening destination’s product mix; and
- Interfacing with other organizations to develop near-term destination improvement results.





Section 5:

Next Steps

Implementation of the Destination Strategic Plan will live heavily in the realm of the HPCVB. The organization will need significant help and input from other destination partners and community leaders.

The inclusive and broad-based approach that was used to develop the Destination Strategic Plan for High Point has produced a variety of recommendations and initiatives that will fully transition High Point into a destination that can both attract visitors on a year-round basis, as well as maintain the City’s legacy as a great place to live and work. The priorities have the potential to increase visitor activities across many markets.

Building the programming to deliver the strategic priorities will require High Point to:

- Continue to be strategic in identifying the highest and best use of its resources to move the needle in increasing overnight visits to the City;
- Collaborate and regularly communicate to a broad audience—including key stakeholders—to ensure tactics are completed and undertaken by the most appropriate partner; and
- Agree upon a process to measure results and progress, while keeping all destination partners accountable.

Implementing this Plan will take coordination at all levels and from many organizations to be successful. The level of interest that was demonstrated in the planning process is reassuring when speculating on the level of success that will be accomplished by the community in bringing the recommendations to life.



Section 6:

Appendix

- A. Priorities
- B. Summary of stakeholder engagement
- C. Attractions/Attractor weightings
- D. Potential metrics to measure success

ELEVATING THE HOME FURNISHINGS BRAND

High Point must maintain and actively grow its solid base as the Home Furnishings Capital of the World.™ The City should continue to adapt its traditional manufacturing legacy towards a modern furniture offering that builds on distinctive creative, design-based activities, exposition and retail.

High Point’s economic heritage was defined by textiles and furniture. As global forces changed the manufacturing nature of both industries, a paradigm shift became apparent. Hosiery, an industry based solely on manufacturing costs, is essentially gone from the region. Furniture manufacturing has changed with many of the plants departing for lower cost labor, but the industry still resides in strong fashion in High Point. Home furnishing transitioned from the manufacturing focus into the creative and experiential age. The High Point furniture presence is defined by the High Point Market, IMC, Furnitureland South, the High Point Furniture Association, a rich array of manufacturer showrooms, and an abundant access to designers.

Foundational Needs & Immediate Opportunity

High Point must maintain and actively grow its solid base as the Home Furnishings Capital of the World,™ but shift emphasis to the design aspects of furniture and servicing a broader business visitor base.

The recommended focus on furniture as a tourism producer for High Point extends to any furniture related entity within a 50-mile radius of the area. All home furnishings in the Triad must be considered “owned” by High Point’s destination product. The most vital furniture destination asset outside High Point’s city limits is Furnitureland South. The largest furniture store in the world needs to be identified along with the High Point Market, IMC, and the critical mass of showrooms as integral to the distinctiveness of High Point as the world’s most important furniture destination.

Another dimension of the home furnishing capital distinction is the mass quantity of exhibition space available in High Point for furniture related tradeshow and industry events. The comparison to other prominent exhibition-oriented destinations provides the best comparison of the dominant product advantage that exists in High Point.

PARADIGM SHIFT

Acknowledge that creative design and experiential retail is the modern version of High Point’s proud legacy in home furnishings.



Example of Exhibition Space
in Cities large-scale exhibit hall space

| City | Space |
|------------|-----------------|
| High Point | 11.5 million SF |
| Las Vegas | 5.5 million SF |
| Chicago | 2.8 million SF |
| Atlanta | 2.5 million SF |
| Orlando | 2.3 million SF |
| New York | 1.1 million SF |
| Anaheim | 1 million SF |

Current Opportunities

- **Programs targeting designers** - The High Point Market Authority, the HPCVB, and the High Point Showroom Association have recently convened to identify ways to engage with designers who attend the High Point Market—or have the potential to do so—and create programing for those designers to increase year-round business. This is example of collaboration and leveraging the City’s home furnishings brand to encourage more business-to-business engagement. The collaboration is also an example of thinking differently and forging and reinforcing new types of partnerships.
- **Furniture Heritage Days** – High Point’s furniture industry is so intertwined to the area’s brand that it can fully support heritage- and cultural-based celebrations of the industry. This event would need to be strategically planned with a business direction constructed around self-sustaining operational concepts. The economic development organizations should band together to deliver this concept and incentivize an event planner to take on this project.

Long-term Investment

As the product development initiatives continue to progress and new venues and attractions open, the temptation to focus on new markets will dramatically increase. This Destination Strategic Plan strongly recommends that new markets be pursued only as another option while the home furnishings market is being fully developed and realized. There is large potential within this market space. The Home furnishing visitor product needs to be properly constructed and cultivated before developing new product options. Destination competitiveness is built on compelling differentiation, and High Point owns Home Furnishings.



TARGETING EVENT-BASED BUSINESS

Special events and festivals can be leveraged or created to encourage visitation during need periods. A destination-oriented events strategy can help drive immediate results that showcase the destination’s forward momentum.

In any destination, a range of special events and festivals can produce business results for targeted need periods and dates. For destinations in transition, an events strategy is essential for creating immediate results that showcase the destination’s forward momentum.

Although events can be categorized under several headings (e.g., other home furnishing related events, sports, conventions and meetings, or High Point University events), the focus of this section will be strictly on **Special Events & Festivals**.

Cultivating and encouraging the development of new events, combined with the expansion of targeted current events will allow High Point to increase visitation allows by target audiences with specialized offerings at times of the year where business needs are most prominent.

Any discussion of events in High Point naturally focuses on the importance of the Market as a catalytic event. However, for this Destination Strategic Plan, the concept of events is broader than the context of the area’s most defining event.

Targeting specific events that fill open dates or need periods in both High Point and throughout Guilford County is a long-range program based on a series of short-term accomplishments.

The planning, coordination, communication, and development needed to organize this event and conference-based approach to business will require significant financial and human resources.

Strategic investments must follow market preparations to fill needed activity voids around the year.

The proposed Congdon Events Center fills a current competitive short-coming. This new asset will create new capacity to allow High Point to welcome a mix of convention, event and sports related activity. As the Center moves from the planning phase to construction towards opening, preparations must be made regarding targeted audiences.

EVENT DECISION MATRIX

Events often help define a destination. In other cases, events help provide needed overnight business at specifically targeted times of the year. Events can be used to incubate and test business concepts. Regardless of the reason, successful event tourism depends on a number of factors. These factors can be assembled and constructed to determine if an event has the allure needed for actually drawing in overnight visitors or whether it is more focused on general enhancement of the area’s quality of life.

To help with this determination, the Destination Strategic Plan includes JLL’s proprietary event decision making matrix. This matrix utilizes scaled measurement ratings across a series of program components to help make a determination of the event’s value to generating tourism. The HPCVB and its Events Committee should utilize the matrix in determining what events it supports and nurtures within this Priorities’ implementation.

| | 1 - Fail | 2 - Poor | 3 - Average | 4 - Above Average | 5 - Excellent | Total |
|---|----------|----------|-------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|
| 1. Program Components | | | | | | |
| 2. Tourism Promotion Impact | | | | | | |
| 3. Benefit to the Destination | | | | | | |
| 4. Unique Selling Point | | | | | | |
| 5. Evidence of Partnership | | | | | | |
| 6. Organizational Structure/ Management Capability | | | | | | |
| 7. Economic Impact | | | | | | |
| 8. Quality of Research | | | | | | |
| 9. Suitable Target Market | | | | | | |
| 10. Comprehensive Marketing Approach | | | | | | |
| 11. Evaluation/Measurement Plan | | | | | | |
| 12. Room nights generated | | | | | | |
| 13. Scale/capacity to attract visitors | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | |

Immediate Opportunities

High Point has a single special event that can currently be classified as a demand driver. The John Coltrane International Jazz & Blues Festival takes place over Labor Day weekend. The celebration of High Point’s most talented musician and celebrity son has seen significant growth over the last nine years. It will continue to grow, but will require collaborative efforts to truly expand with strategic intent. Future decisions on outreach, location, partners, and overall curation should be assembled to shape this event into a more powerful annual force.

Recommendation: Develop a specific strategic marketing plan to increase overnight visitor growth within The John Coltrane International Jazz & Blues Festival as a visitor demand driver.

Future Opportunities

There are several immediate opportunities for developing new events or expanding current events into key demand drivers. Because these events are either new or expansion worthy, they can be programmed to fill need periods, expand the overall community awareness or provide a more expressive glimpse into the cultural landscape of the community. Some concepts for new or expanded events include:

- **Hi-Fest** – High Point’s current multi-cultural festival takes place on the fourth weekend of September. The events combine music and food trucks to showcase the multiple cultures that represent High Point. This event has significant opportunity for growth but will need hand holding, support and creative direction.
- **Thomas-Built Bus Rally** – This event concept captures an industrial player that is headquartered in the area to create an event capable of driving overnight visitation. High Point has a solid base of auto club rallies and this bus concentration creates opportunity to highlight locally made buses and foster overnight visitation in the process. The opportunity is further validated by the connection of “A Streetcar Named Desire” to High Point. The Thomas-Built Bus Rally can feature specialty buses, paint-jobs and conversions to highlight the creative expression of these local buses. The event requires a creative event planner with expertise in producing automobile-oriented events.

Any additional new events proposed to either potentially drive overnight visitation to High Point or request some level of funding from HPCVB should be measured within the matrix to determine overall fit as a potential destination driver. There is no shortage of new event concepts or opportunities for recruiting events hosted in other cities to move to High Point, but decision making on investments should be directly linked to overall intended and actually delivered return on investment.



HIGHLIGHTING EVENTS ON HIGHPOINT.ORG

The HPCVB should continue to push events to potential guests through the website, highpoint.org/events. This page is capable of expansion and should aggressively pursue new listings and expanded content to include parking, event details, publicity and reviews. Additionally, the next phase of the integration with arts and culture should be revisited. Currently, some of this burden has been carried by a privatized website, explorehighpoint.com/events. This privately-operated website creates confusion on content and location while siphoning off visitors to High Point CVB’s website.

Additionally, the HPCVB should work with multiple departments of the City of High Point to provide an easy-to-follow event planner guide book that details the process for planning, producing and marketing a true overnight tourism producing event.

LEVERAGING HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

High Point should leverage the success of High Point University to extend the City’s brand as a college town.

Universities and higher-education institutions produce multiple reasons to visit a community while also contributing to a community’s destination product mix. In many cases, universities are the leading drivers in community and economic development as they work to build a safe, attractive and compelling community for their students. Universities are a formidable partner for shepherding ongoing destination development efforts.

High Point University (HPU) serves as a development steward and the primary place-maker for the City. The investments made by the university to build a connected, attractive, and functional campus space have routinely reached beyond university property boundaries to reshape views of the community-at-large. The University embodies the vision of its inspirational President, Dr. Nido Qubein as it systematically takes constant steps to be more and more extraordinary.

Recommended Strategic Tactics

- Prepare a tourism services calendar around High Point University events
- Engage High Point University within the Destination Development leadership coalition
- Encourage and support development and investment direction that has destination impacts
- Develop an “extraordinary” service program that builds on the initial partnership outreach service.
- Craft Premier Life Skills workshops that fill need period for the area.
- Assess and determine opportunities with the academic disciplines of HPU to partner in bringing meetings and conferences to High Point.

HPU Effect on High Point

HPU has been one of the most demonstrative growth factors for High Point, growing its overall economic impact on the community from \$160.3 million in 2005, to over half a billion in 2018. The University attracts 100,000 visitors to the city each year through campus tours, family weekends, alumni gatherings, athletic endeavors, and cultural events, according to HPU.

As HPU has fostered unprecedented growth in High Point, its attention continues to expand further into the community with which it shares a name. The University routinely takes an active role in both envisioning the High Point of the future, but also investing in the projects to bring them to life. The downtown catalyst project is fully connected to HPU from the High Point Rockers baseball stadium to the Children’s Museum and the future Congdon Events Center.



The University will continue to play an instrumental role in the community’s destination economy as one of the primary demand drivers. As with most university cities, the opportunities to build direct and indirect tourism business are abundant and thoroughly connected to other organizations.

HPU’S ROLE IN DRIVING VISITATION

|  TYPE OF TOURISM |  HPU ROLE |  FUTURE OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTNERS |
|---|--|---|
| Commencement and Alumni/Family Weekends | Event Producer | City – Signage, event production approvals, Banners HPCVB/Business High Point Chamber of Commerce – Street Party |
| Move-in/Orientation | Event Producer | HPCVB – Education on community offerings and visitor services |
| Camps & Symposium | Host/ Producer | HPCVB – Coordinate for Summer/Off-period personal skills development conferences, Hotels, Event Center |
| Athletic Events | Event Host/Producer | City/HPCVB – Discuss future athletic venue desires and needs. |
| Special Events (including exhibitions) | Host/Producer | HPCVB – Sales & Services, City - Signage, permits & tax revenues, visitors & residents |
| Departmental Conferences | Content Provider | HPCVB - Full event support and coordination |

Aligning Image & Outreach

The integration of HPU within the City has resulted in remarkable accomplishments. The University’s role continues to be emphasized as a positive, primary contributor towards overall success. The future of this role can be benchmarked with other university cities. These communities have relished the role played by the university as an economic development driver and as a driver of the community’s image. All efforts to create messages representing High Point should be certain to create connections to High Point University. Additionally, the community has fully adopted HPU through a series of business expressions reading “I Love HPU.” These messages can be further adapted to connect to the Extraordinary creed of the University.As the community continues to expand its hospitality training and visitor services, this notion of Extraordinary service provide a strong foundational theme to connect to programs.

High Point should consider connecting to the HPU brand, “Premier Life Skills University.” HPU’s campus, expansive growth, strong commitment to academic excellence, and commitment to ongoing investment are visible components of the area’s success, but each of these elements is embodied in most college towns. Connecting the slogan to High Point’s convention marketplace separates the City from other college towns. The skills developed through this ownership help shape a better world as key individual weaknesses can be overcome and molded into personal strengths. This theme could potentially be utilized in conjunction with the Events Center to produce adult-based educational offerings that convey personal life skills. These personal motivational “camps” could potentially be utilized with the Congdon Events Center to create calendar options for off-season programming that can help fill the Congdon Events Center while generating symposium related business for the community’s business environment.



RE-IMAGINING DOWNTOWN

While the need for a downtown with more diverse offerings that can attract visitors has been recognized, the proactive role of the HPCVB in supporting a broad spectrum of development is a key priority of the plan

As noted in Section 3, urban downtowns routinely provide a concentration of visitor-oriented offerings such as retail, restaurant and recreation. Conversely, High Point’s downtown has evolved primarily to serve the needs of the Market and its various connected showrooms. Other districts responded to this market shift by adding more amenities and services to fill needed visitor and consumer demand.

With multiple areas of the community serving various commercial needs, High Point must invest in linking these districts to provide consistency in quality of experience, signage, customer service and transportation.

This transformation is crucial to build High Point as a tourism destination. Currently, downtown has three distinctly different destination personalities:

- A vibrant and active convention and exhibition district that springs to life to support the rich array of showrooms and studios when Market is in full swing
- A vacant and sleepy ghost-town like atmosphere when the market-based showrooms are awaiting the next season.
- A hopeful and anxious energy built around the forthcoming transformational development initiatives of the ballpark, children’s museum, and Congdon Events Center.



The hopeful energy provides a beautiful vision for High Point’s future as a destination, but true realization of this vision depends on two factors:

- **Rising above the current non-market atmosphere**
Market produces dynamic street life in the spring and fall when visitors from around the world descend on High Point. These visitors arrive fully prepared to contribute to the local economy. When they depart the town feels vacant and devoid of activity. Travelers encountering downtown High Point on these non-market days perceive a ghost-town environment. The lack of street life produces safety and security concerns causing potential activity to move along to other more visibly vibrant areas. Downtown programming can be focused on critical areas to build a base perception of activity, vibrancy and safety. Signage and banners can assist in directing visitors to key areas. This factor should be addressed gradually over time by approaching from a block-by-block set of deemed priorities.
- **Synchronizing the development of demand drivers with incubating support amenities**
A vibrant downtown must have a mix of uses that creates street and sidewalk traffic throughout the day. This vision depends on residents, commuters, employees and visitors. Their patronage enables coffee shops, restaurants, bars, entertainment and retail to open and hopefully thrive. Embarking on this business journey is a risky proposition that requires brave entrepreneurs. An incubator approach similar to a technology-based business incubator site may need to be fashioned to help prioritize and pursue the needed business, residential and service offerings.
- **Connecting to other parts of High Point**
High Point has a thriving retail and restaurant zone that exists just beyond the traditional boundary of downtown. While the downtown (market district) experience is being shaped and developed for the future, the community should proactively link visitors with the amenities along the retail and restaurant zone—the area locally referred to as ‘Uptown.’

DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

- Forward High Point
- City of High Point
- Business High Point Chamber of Commerce
- High Point Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Economic Development Authority
- Community Foundation
- Market Authority
- High Point University
- Elliott Sidewalk Development

- **Delivering higher quality visitor-facing services**

Visitors to High Point often exhibit different spending patterns and preferences from local or regional customers and commuters. Their primary trip purposes are typically built around retail or educational-related experiences that set a mark around high quality. As the downtown High Point experience is further developed, the emphasis on quality must be maintained. Quality of service and appearance needs to be a consideration of future development and planning. The combined efforts of community facing economic development organizations can adopt objective, customer driven ratings and comments through Yelp and TripAdvisor as a tool to help encourage on-going change to address needed quality improvements. The opening of BB&T Point is highly positive and the commitment to a high-quality development initiative is a strong indication that future developments will provide a similar commitment to quality and beautification.

- **Timing the pursuit and fulfillment of the area’s catchment area**

The experiential venues being added to Downtown High Point add new depth to the region’s overall quality of life. Marketing to attract visitors to this newly established downtown must be pursued in a phased manner. Regional curiosity is a valuable device for short-term success and should be actively pursued in early years as the destination product grows. Once new high-quality hotels and amenities are successfully opening, the catchment area of potential customer base begins to change. Marketing can continue to extend from that point, but marketing outreach should not outpace product improvement. Downtown High Point’s destination future must be developed before it is marketed. This will require the organizational shifts as noted in the HPCVB organizational section.

Approach & Process

The continued transformation of Downtown High Point will be a delicate strategic process. It must be undertaken in a realistic phased approach. One aspect of this phasing must be the recognition of purpose.

Ignite High Point was an attempted effort to envision the future of several commercial areas including downtown High Point. The ideas were radical but the justification for the outer areas were built around a model of land valuation. The future envisioned through this Destination Strategic Plan is rooted in high-quality, visitor business engagement, with increased property value being a side effect.

Many of the comparatives referenced in Ignite High Point’s presentation were with communities that held significant dependence on the tourism or service industry for economic vitality. Communities like Asheville, Chattanooga and Greenville provide excellent stories of successful community growth that have outpaced High Point in recent years. High Point is undergoing a different transitional process and the phased approach towards assembling a new view on the importance and value of tourism will help it achieve new found success. The role played by commercial districts will be vital to growth from the Triad followed by heightened results from instate and southeastern travelers.



LINKING DISTRICTS

Helping visitors explore all of High Point’s districts will round out their experience in the City and will better brand the destination.

With multiple areas of the community serving various commercial needs, High Point must invest in linking the districts surrounding downtown to provide consistency in quality of experience, signage, customer service and transportation. The diversity of interesting, high quality and locally connected businesses in other districts provides a range of offers to build memorable experiences. Connectivity between the districts and downtown needs to be emphasized going forward as does the connection between this area and High Point University. The Neal F. Austin Library plays a potential role in providing bridge experiences that connect two parts of the community. Community planning can continue to look for other similar development opportunities that help to extend each of these two areas to better connect together.



CONNECTING TO THE REGIONAL ECONOMY AND DESTINATION

Alliances with Greensboro and other areas of Guilford County are needed and proactive management of the various tourism-related relationships should be strategically pursued.

High Point’s connection to the other parts of North Carolina’s Triad, specifically Greensboro and the rest of Guilford County, is an easily overlooked competitive advantage. Shared funding streams from the county’s bed tax, intertwined infrastructure with rail, roads and airlift and a connected base of regional residents is a significant basis for future partnerships that elevate tourism business for High Point. High Point plays an important role as a regional player in the Triad.

Aligning Around Advocacy

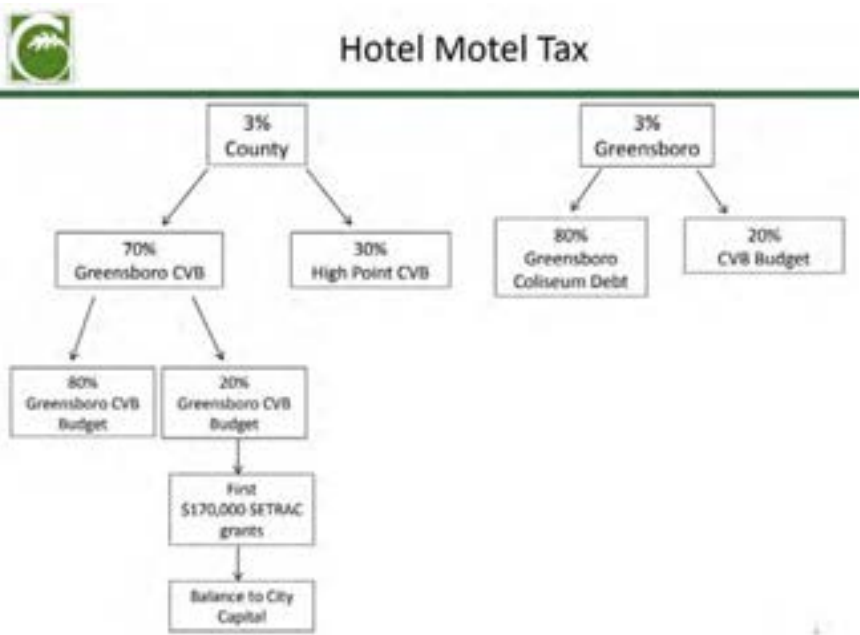
The Greensboro CVB and HPCVB should pursue various collaborative initiatives that will benefit the County’s tourism product as a whole. These two convention and visitors bureaus share destination assets, an airport and a funding source.

- Hotel Motel Tax issues**

The Guilford County Hotel Motel Tax represents the primary funding stream for both organizations. Monitoring investments, obstacles and contributors to hotel motel tax collections can be an ongoing conversation between the entities.

- Advocacy around state issues**

Destinations must often band together to confront legislative action that can debilitate tourism interest. The two primary Guilford County destination organizations should stay united on legislative items that could potentially impact tourism.



- **Calendar Management/Large-scale Events**

The overall calendar of special events, sports and conventions coming to Guilford County contributes to the success of both CVBs. In some cases, including High Point Market, the need for visitor services extends throughout the county. Graduations, large conventions, ACC tournaments and some specific sports events produce business that can span beyond the reach of one single destination entity. Collaborative planning can help build a comprehensive and cohesive approach to event services during these need periods while also constructing a schedule of need dates for future pursuit of event business. The Greensboro Sports Foundation should also be included within these future conversations.

- **Air Service**

Additional partnerships with Visit Winston-Salem and the Piedmont Triad International Airport can systematically target planned and desired air service and route growth. Combined efforts with economic development agencies can help assemble a more organized and focused approach to air capacity associated with this important regional transportation linkage.

The format for all collaborative conversations should be informal. Quarterly leadership meetings will help to add contacts to email newsletter distribution lists and invitations to industry updates that will ultimately help strengthen these connections. The primary component is the revenue source that unites these two organizations as collaborators focused on driving success for one another.

Aligning Tourism with Regional Economic Development Efforts

The regional connection to furniture, art and design is captured as a targeted industry of the Guilford County Economic Development Partnership. Combined, Guilford County’s tourism industry could support the larger efforts to attract targeted industries and the talent that drives them by helping to tout and quantify the County’s many quality of place assets. HPCVB should work closely with the Greensboro Convention and Visitors Bureau to document the many assets and activities in the County for those who not only visit, but also live and work in the dynamic region.



SERVICING SPORTS TOURISM AND CONFERENCES

Until a critical mass of competitive venues is established, High Point can concentrate on its overall visitor experience for existing and near-term sports, meetings and conference business.

The field of sports tourism has seen radical growth over the past 10 years and will continue to grow well into the future. The resulting pursuit of sports business has sparked a “space race” as communities rush to increase the quantity and quality of fields and courts to remain competitive. High Point can choose to enter this race to compete, but it is recognizably a never-ending series of investments to stay competitive. The more strategic approach will necessitate an understanding of under-served sports and targeting future venue development efforts to fill these available opportunities.

High Point currently does not offer the critical mass of sports, meetings and conference venues nor space necessary to effectively compete in venue-based event recruitment business. Other communities with more space, more investment, higher quality amenities, and more sales capacity are going to be more successful in sales results against the current High Point offerings.

The existing and future book of sports, meetings and conference business coming into High Point still requires detailed hospitality and customer service. High Point can immediately concentrate on its overall visitor experience for existing and near-term sports, meetings and conference business while pursuing longer-term steps to improve the product mix.

Long-term Investments

The race for new facilities to drive sports tourism is creating an overly crowded competitive space. Destinations that have a niche focus have an advantage. High Point must be strategic in pursuing sports facility development.

As sports tourism grows in High Point, the HPCVB must reexamine its overall approach for pursuing this market. Currently there is a moderate level of sports sales occurring that is outpaced by the organization’s commitment to quality direct visitor services.

Despite the crowded landscape, there are unique opportunities for specialized niche facilities

High Point has competitive advantages that should be explored as part of a more specific overall sports development plan. The following possibilities are highlighted as potential drivers that should be explored further for development options to provide future overnight sports tourism offerings:

- **High Point University** – HPU provides a comprehensive athletics department for building potential intercollegiate athletic competitions. The school also provides a sports management program for valued young talent and ideas. Additionally, the sports communications program could also be tapped for potential input and concept. The HPCVB should partner with HPU to pursue a concentrated sports development program and long-range investment strategy.
- **Regatta/Rowing** – Regatta Central, a dedicated site for rowing clubs and regatta events lists one race locale in North Carolina, Oak Hollow Lake in High Point. The opportunity to secure more rowing events can potentially cross state lines and bring success from a youth sports and possibly even from a collegiate club level. Each April, the lake holds the North Carolina Masters and Youth Rowing Championships hosted by the Triad United Rowing Association. In 2017, the lake hosted five rowing clubs for the state championships fielding a total of 81 event entries. By 2019, the number of entries had grown to 102 even though one less club was attending. Regattas and associated facility enhancements should be explored for potential expansion in High Point.

SPORTS TOURISM

Competitively speaking, sports tourism is one of the most coveted and passionately pursued visitor markets across the US. Destinations are routinely designing and building sports complexes intended to produce overnight business for the community, yet not planned with the overnight tournament organizer and participant in mind. Tournament organizers require a certain level of quantity and quality of fields or courts. The organizer must know that the event is going to reach a specified revenue level and not be overly complicated to manage. Participants need to know that they will be safe, contained and comfortable with access to nearby amenities such as hotels and restaurants.

The Sports Events and Tourism Association (Sports ETA) list 29 primary sports commission or convention and visitor bureau members from North Carolina. As a whole, North Carolina is very active in sports tourism and it makes for a overly crowded marketplace.

- **Pickleball** - Pickleball is receiving a significant amount of attention and interest in the High Point area. This interest is occurring elsewhere also. This sport should be cautiously pursued based on the potential and likely growth in competition.
- **Fitness related events** - Fitness related events like marathons, Spartan Races, bicycling and triathlons have great potential for the park lands around High Point. The Community will want to ensure these events can maximize overnight stay potential for High Point.

Strengthening Participant and Spectator Attractions and Amenities

Regardless of investment decisions on the direction of sports facilities in High Point, any feasibility study will highlight the need for quality amenities in close proximity of facilities. Expanding the number of restaurants, entertainment diversions and hotels in the immediate vicinity of High Point will be necessary to yield booking success. The destination must focus on developing and supporting the amenities necessary for success.

COMPETITIVE SPORTS DESTINATIONS

The marketplace within which High Point will compete for youth and amateur sports events is made more difficult by mass market facilities in close proximity to North Carolina. Below are examples of sports complexes with which High Point would compete:



Rock Hill, SC

Rock Hill has developed a strong reputation for large, well-managed and accessible indoor and outdoor facilities including a specialty facility, the Giordana Velodrome. More facilities including an indoor athletic center will be forthcoming, and the community has solid track record among event planners for delivering quality service.

Gatlinburg, TN

The resort mountain community of Gatlinburg, TN is home to Rocky Top Sports World. The multi-purpose facility capitalizes on the draw of Great Smokey Mountains National Park, a downtown with a wide range of amenities and the proximity to attractions in Pigeon Forge for a successful operation.



North Carolina

Within North Carolina, the landscape is large and equally as crowded. Greensboro and Winston-Salem both have solid reputation as sporting event hosts at both the youth and collegiate levels. Cary, Concord and Asheville have been actively investing in new specialized facilities ranging from soccer to tennis to aquatics to baseball. Smaller communities are beginning to force their way into the competitive mix as witnessed by Rocky Mount’s focus on sports facilities on the home page of the destination website. This community has invested heavily in both indoor and outdoor facilities generating significant overnight business for the area.

PREPARING FOR THE CONGDON EVENTS CENTER

Target opportunities that fit the center, are in line with High Point’s capacity to accommodate attendees and the City’s ability to compete effectively for conference business.

The proposed Congdon Events Center will address the High Point’s need for an event and conference venue that is open for use year-round; however, work is required to adequately market the venue for potential users. This new asset will allow High Point to welcome a mix of convention, event and sports related activity. As the Center moves from the planning phase to construction towards opening, HPCVB—as the designated marketer of the Center—should begin positioning to compete within this marketplace. The first step will be refining and uncovering target markets to those opportunities that fit the center, High Point’s capacity and its ability to compete effectively.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The creation and development of this Destination Strategic Plan benefited from active engagement from the HPCVB’s leadership, key stakeholders, and partner organizations. Over the course of the project, JLL had the opportunity to meet with more than 70 stakeholders and crafted a digital survey to solicit perceptions and feedback from a broad array of community leaders who are interested in and/or contribute to High Point’s destination fabric. Additionally, under the leadership of High Point University, a group of City leaders and leaders from several organizations working to improve the City’s quality of place and economic competitiveness was convened to ensure that the priorities emerging from the Destination Strategic Plan for its tourism future are aligned with the City’s overall vision and goals.

Stakeholder Survey

Distributed by the HPCVB, JLL used the responses from the digital survey to validate themes uncovered during the interview process and to allow a broader group of community leaders to provide input on the desired direction of the Destination Strategic Plan. One hundred and ninety-three people responded to the survey.

Top 5 Attributes that Make High Point an Appealing Destination

Number of Responses

- 116 Affordable
- 90 Accessible
- 86 Roots in furniture industry
- 86 High Point University
- 69 Hospitality and friendliness

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

- Business High Point Chamber of Commerce
- City of High Point
- CoHab Space
- Community Foundation
- Design Access
- Elliott Sidewalk Development
- Forward High Point
- Furniture Hall of Fame
- Furnitureland South
- Guilford Technical Community College
- High Point Economic Development Authority
- High Point History Museum
- High Point Rockers
- High Point Showroom Association
- High Point University
- High Point Wildcats
- International Market Centers
- International Textile Alliance
- John Coltrane Festival
- Market Authority
- Pinnacle Financial
- Plant 7
- VCA High Point

ATTRACTIONS AND ATTRACTORS

Destinations have a range of attractions—some of which are more geared toward local and resident enjoyment; some that appeal to visitors as diversionary options during their time in the destination and others that are unique and compelling enough to help cause the actual visit.

As part of its work to understand the current state of High Point as a visitor destination, JLL assessed the various attractions in High Point given their ability to attract overnight visitors. Using our proprietary Attraction/Attractor Scale, JLL rated High Point’s destination assets to determine marketing opportunities, content development and future resource investments for each individual asset.

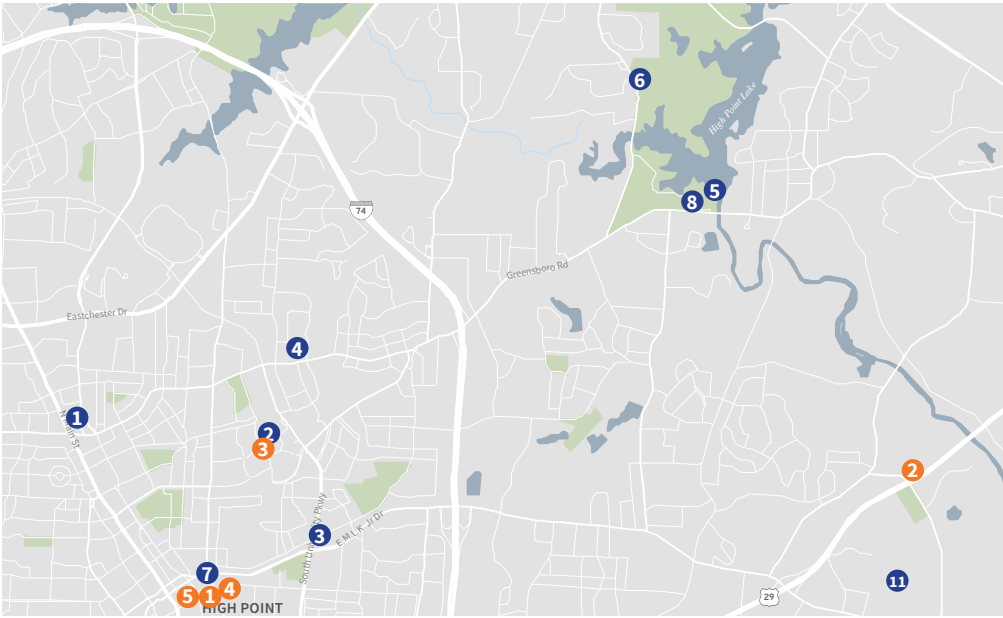
High Point’s main visitor attractors (i.e., those places, events, institutions that cause visitors to go to High Point) are the semi-annual High Point Market, High Point University, and Furnitureland South. Events such as the ITA Showtime and the John Coltrane Festival also attract some overnight guests. Other attractions play a role in driving or augmenting the visitor experience, but alone do not drive visitation to the City.

High Point Attractors

- 1 International Furniture Mart
- 2 Furnitureland South
- 3 High Point University
- 4 John Coltrane Festival
- 5 ITA Showtime

High Point Attractions

- 1 Furniture Hall of Fame
- 2 Sechrest Gallery
- 3 The 512 Collective
- 4 High Point Museum
- 5 City Lake Park
- 6 Piedmont Environmental Center
- 7 Historic Train Depot
- 8 Mendenhall Homeplace
- 9 Museum of Old Domestic Life



METRICS

As the HPCVB works to implement and coordinate implementation of the Destination Strategic Plan, a transparent system for reporting program results will be key to continuing momentum, as well as showing partners the results of the community’s collaborative efforts to strengthen High Point as a year-round visitor destination.

JLL recommends that the HPCVB follow a simple industry standard in collecting, interpreting, and communicating data. The HPCVB should report progress in three separate categories:

Tracking Overall Destination Condition to best understand the overall vitality of tourism throughout the City (both that driven directly through the HPCVB efforts and visits driven by others, but that the HPCVB in some way supports).

- Monitoring Travel Activity indicators allows the HPCVB to effectively project future travel expectations as a direct response to the targeted efforts undertaken in the Destination Strategic Plan.
- Measuring Annual Market Results utilizes a solid methodology to trace direct effects from HPCVB programming based on connections to elements of its annual business plan and the initiatives of the Destination Strategic Plan.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Overall Destination Condition | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Travel SpendingVisitor ProfileTax SavingsLodging PerformanceAdditional relevant socioeconomic trends | HPCVB monitors results |
| Travel Activity Indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Website ActivitySocial Media EngagementSales LeadsTravel Media Coverage | New/enhanced HPCVB programming and coordination will influence |
| Annual Market Results | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Change in Point of Origin AwarenessEvent attendanceProgress on destination developmentsHPCVB Annual Plan results | HPCVB drives programing and measures results |



About JLL's Hotels & Hospitality Group

JLL's Hotels & Hospitality Group has completed more transactions than any other hotels and hospitality real estate advisor over the last five years, totaling more than \$71 billion worldwide. Between negotiating the world's most extraordinary, enticing, and profitable property deals, the group's 350-strong global team in over 20 countries also closed more than 5,300 advisory, valuation and asset management assignments. Investors worldwide turn to JLL to shape their strategies, tailor their portfolios and maximize the value of their assets. We are recognized as the global leader in real estate services across hospitality properties of all shapes and sizes. Our expert advice is backed by industry-leading research. We apply our broad spectrum of hotel valuation, brokerage, asset management and consultancy services through every phase of the hotel lifecycle. We have helped more hotel investors, owners and operators achieve high returns on their assets than any other real estate advisor in the world. Whether you are looking for a hotel or you're ready to sell, we'll use our capital markets expertise, hospitality industry knowledge and global relationships to put the right parties together and execute a bespoke deal that exceeds your objectives.

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