

10-02-2019 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #9: Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau on its 2019/20 Strategic Plan

Council Question:

How does the revenue from the past year compare to revenue in each of the past 5 years?

Visitors Bureau Response:

The revenue is up nearly 5% and hotel occupancy and rate is holding steady. Overall we attribute this to three factors:

- 1. A strong global economy*
- 2. Chapel Hill has what visitors want in a destination (climate, location, University, unique sightseeing and restaurants, music and progressive vibe).*
- 3. Strong marketing and event draws*

Council Question:

What has the impact of Silent Sam protests been on Chapel Hill's tourism?

Visitors Bureau Response:

From a tourism standpoint, there has been no decline in travel to Chapel Hill, overnight visits or demand. We attribute this to three factors:

- 1. Overall Chapel Hill is still seen as safe. Potential visitors to Chapel Hill may be deterred from visiting if the probability of victimization is high but we have not seen that mindset. Research has shown that the events that pose a threat to the safety of individuals, such as a terrorist attack and wars, reduce tourism activity. The headline news of Silent Sam created an increase in call; but in the end, did not cause an overall drop in numbers.*
- 2. Economic and tourism development require a long view. For decades, the University, town, and tourism marketers in the private and public sectors have consistently communicated the virtues of Chapel Hill: safety, education, culture and a commitment to progressive work.*
- 3. The dollar is strong and Chapel Hill wants what national (primarily mid-Atlantic) travelers are looking for.*

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Council Question:

Has there been a decline in the number of visitors to our visitors centers?

Visitors Bureau Response:

The Visitors Center saw 12,000 visitors last year, slightly flat, not growing, and not declining. The typical visitor to the Chapel Hill Visitors Center is:

40-65

Interested in moving, retiring, exploring, investing Chapel Hill (as opposed to college).

Their questions are open ended, i.e., "who do I contact if I want to move, invest, learn..."

They are grateful for a live body.

They are grateful for a welcome.

They love our restrooms, chairs, re-charge units.

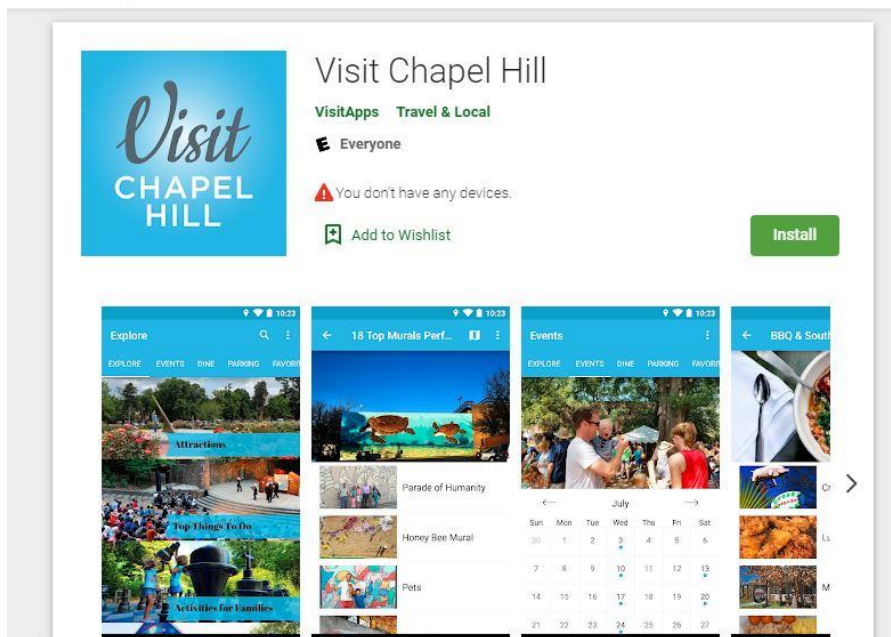
But the numbers are not growing.

Council Question:

What current smartphone apps are available for visitors to Orange County that help give them information as they navigate the area?

Visitors Bureau Response:

VisitChapelHill is a great app, produced by our agency.



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Council Question:

Where will the print ads referred to on p. 225 of the packet appear?

Visitors Bureau Response:

Print is 30% of the budget so many variations on these ads are seen online.

Print:

OUR STATE magazine

VisitNC Travel Guide

WALTER magazine

Carolina Alumni Review

Southern Living

Meetings and conference publications