2027-2031

VISIT JACKSON MS

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN: ASSESSMENT AND NEW DIRECTIONS



Prepared For VISIT Jackson! MISSISSIPPI

Prepared By NICHOLS TOURISM GROUP
Advisory services for an evolving tourism industry

DESTINATION CONSULTANCY GROUP

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1.0 PLAN SUMMARY

1.1 Planning Background

In late summer 2025, Visit Jackson MS launched a new effort to prepare an updated 5-year Strategic Plan, providing direction and prioritization of future destination and organizational efforts. Visit Jackson MS engaged the planning team of Nichols Tourism Group and Destination Consultancy Group for the assignment.



The process incorporated three primary phases. The first provided the planning team with a strong understanding of the destination and organization. A broad mix of one-on-one interviews were undertaken with staff, Board of Directors and key industry leaders. The range of existing research was investigated and a program of new research initiatives were undertaken to provide insights on visitor profiles, destination product attributes and organizational strengths and weaknesses. Additional on-site visits provided the Advisory Team a strong understanding of the orientation of the destination, its key visitor experiences and proximity to other competitive areas.

With this foundation, the planning team developed a State of the Destination analysis that considered recent performance, along with findings and critical issues related to the destination's customers, its products, the organization itself and the role of the visitor industry within the broader community. These primary findings were presented to the Visit Jackson MS staff, the Board of Directors and a study Steering Committee in November 2025.

Integrating the feedback from the State of the Destination analysis, the Advisory Team developed the recommended strategic plan elements. These included an updated Mission and Vision statement for the organization, five strategic Pillars that organized plan elements and then an integrated blend of Objectives, Strategies and Tactics related to each Pillar.

1.2 KEY PLAN COMPONENTS

Key components of the plan included the following items.

Visit Jackson is the official Destination Leadership Organization (DLO) for the City of Jackson, Mississippi. As a quasi-governmental agency established by the Mississippi State Legislature, Visit Jackson promotes the city as a premier destination for meetings, conventions, sporting events, and leisure travel, generating economic impact and enhancing the community's quality of life.

Visit Jackson MS Mission Statement

The mission of Visit Jackson is to engage and inspire residents, community stakeholders, and visitors by promoting Jackson as a welcoming and vibrant destination for conventions, meetings, sporting events, special events, and leisure and business travel. Through strategic destination marketing and community engagement, Visit Jackson seeks to create rich and memorable cultural experiences, foster a strong sense of place, and enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity of our community.

Visit Jackson MS 2035 Organization Vision Statement

To be the catalyst for Jackson's transformation into one of America's most vibrant and welcoming destination cities, recognized for its culture, creativity, hospitality, and sustainable economic growth through collaborative leadership and innovative destination stewardship.

A new Destination Vision Statement was also developed with refinements to Visit Jackson's Purpose, Values and Promises.

Five Strategic Plan Pillars provided the foundation for the plan: Refine visitor targeting, Enhance product offerings, Strengthen organizational effectiveness, Expand stakeholder engagement and Thrive through clear metrics and measures. Key elements under each of the Pillars follow.



REFINE PILLAR: Targeting to Attract High Value Visitor Segments

Objective 1: Use geo-location data and relevant visitor survey results to refine and target high-value segments.
Objective 2: Launch a campaign targeted to day visitors with focus on why Jackson is a "must do" multi-day experience.
Objective 3: Undertake a new internal resident campaign that stimulates Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) interest, while enhancing pride in its backyard.
Objective 4: Craft initiatives to reconnect with prospects that have not traveled to Jackson and develop messaging that stimulates multi-day travel interest.



ENHANCE PILLAR: Product Offerings for Reinforced Destination Appeal

Objective 1: Act on Destination Master Plan lodging recommendations by targeting a range of size and caliber properties.
Objective 2: Form a citywide cultural tourism working group to collectively integrate and promote the range of museums and cultural institutions.
Objective 3: Increasingly showcase the range of outdoor recreation assets and how they can be activated.
Objective 4: Craft new wayfinding approaches that facilitate a visitor's understanding of how to access products dispersed throughout the city.

STRENGTHEN PILLAR: Organization to Ensure Effectiveness and Ongoing Vitality

Objective 1: Approve and execute a multi-year priority-based DLO strategic plan.
Objective 2: Undertake a revised DLO chart and increase internal collaboration.
Objective 3: Refine the new DLO funding/financial strategy commencing in FY2026/2027.
Objective 4: Reset the current DLO charitable foundation to gain a potential new funding advantage.
Objective 5: Diversify the composition of the DLO Board of Directors to ensure strong participation, community engagement and influence.

EXPAND PILLAR: Stakeholder and Resident Engagement on Tourism's Community Role and Value

Objective 1: Activate a formalized advocacy and community relations plan.
Objective 2: Revise the Annual Report into a Community Report on Tourism, identifying results and new strategic directions.
Objective 3: Form a permanent Jackson Tourism Council to fully represent the city and visitor industry sector to receive complete advice and provide enhanced tourism advocacy.
Objective 4: Establish a local tourism/hospitality association to provide 'common purpose' strength and focus on key advocacy issues in conjunction with Visit Jackson.

THRIVE PILLAR: Through Dedicated Research and Agreed-To Destination/DLO Metrics and Measures

Objective 1: Review and approve destination/DLO metrics and measurements.
Objective 2: Continue using a customized performance scorecard.
Objective 3: Ensure an integrated DLO contact database covering consumer, group and stakeholder/resident audiences.
Objective 4: Coordinate and fully understand current research project outcomes and institute a long-term research program tied to the information needs of strategic and operational plans.

A blend of strategies and tactics to address the various Pillar objectives are presented in Section 4 of the report. Prioritized timing of implementation and a repertoire of metrics to evaluate progress are also provided.



2.0 PLAN OVERVIEW

2.1 Assignment Context

Visit Jackson is the official Destination Leadership Organization for the City of Jackson, Mississippi. As a quasi-governmental agency established by the Mississippi State Legislature, Visit Jackson promotes the city as a premier destination for meetings, conventions, sporting events, and leisure travel, generating economic impact and enhancing the community's quality of life. Visit Jackson MS is led by a 10-member appointed Board of Directors.

Visit Jackson MS is funded principally through a 1% restaurant tax and a 1% hotel/motel tax with additional financial assistance over the past three years through use of ARPA and CARES Act tourism funds, with the current 2026 budget at approximately $3.6 million. The staff complement of Visit Jackson MS is 17 full-time and five part-time professionals.

This is the first formalized priority-based and destination-focused strategic plan for Visit Jackson MS and provides five-year guidance to the organization's operational plan that covers destination marketing, sales and services, tourism development, community engagement and advocacy, and resources management. A previous simplified strategic plan was completed pre-COVID in early 2020. The enclosed long-term plan is the result of a more destination-focused, research-driven and facilitated process that took place over a 10-month period from mid-2025 to April 2026 through the assistance of an independent third-party tourism advisory team.

The Visit Jackson MS entity selected an advisory planning team led by Nichols Tourism Group (NTG) to facilitate and implement the process of developing the new strategic plan. The assignment team incorporated the unique destination planning capabilities of NTG with the tourism research and strategy tenure of Destination Consultancy Group (DCG). By combining the diverse skill sets of the two advisory team organizations, a blend of differentiated attributes was brought to this important assignment. These included:

- A complementary mix of community and tourism research/planning capabilities,
- Extensive experience in destination product/experience development with full participation in tourism master planning,
- A strong background in community tourism and DLO advocacy with Mississippi and national perspectives,
- A blend of innovative/leading-edge tourism thought educators and advisors, and
- The ability to integrate sustainability and stewardship in the destination planning process.



2.2 Assignment Assessment and Planning Aims

Four strategic planning approach aims were set for completion of this assignment.

1. July-November 2025
Visit Jackson MS Board, Staff and Steering Committee Destination Planning Dialogue

2. August-November 2025
DestinationNEXT Tourism Futures Research, and LeadDO/LeadDESTINATION, Visitor Profile, Resident Sentiment and Geo-Location Survey Analyses Review and Implications for Visit Jackson MS

3. November 2025-February 2026
Jackson MS Area/Visit Jackson MS Critical Issues, Challenges, Opportunities and New Priority Initiatives Analysis and Conclusions

4. February-April 2026
Visit Jackson MS Strategic Destination Plan Documentation'

5. October 2026
Plan Launch and Unveiling

2.3 Methodology, Timing and Outcomes

The strategic planning program of work began in late July 2025 as the Advisory Team participated in a three-day Board Retreat, in which key successes and challenges were discussed. The retreat was coordinated by Al Hutchinson, the former CEO of Visit Baltimore and Pam Confer, a motivational speaker based in Jackson. Senior staff members reported recent initiatives to the Board of Directors and preliminary SWOT factors were reviewed. This session provided the advisory team a strong foundation to commence their efforts.

To further facilitate the strategic planning process a Steering Committee was formed with members including:

Christopher Pike - *Executive Director, Jackson Redevelopment Authority*
Hunter Gardner - *Executive Director, Hinds County Economic Development Authority*
Cherre Miller – *General Manager, Jackson Convention Complex*
Pamela Junior – *Director Emeritus, Two Mississippi Museums*
Jeff Good – *Restaurateur, Sal and Mookie's, Bravo! and Broad Street*
Mende Malouf Alford – *Owner/General Manager, Old Capitol Inn*
Liz Brister – *President, Downtown Jackson Partners*
Rosa Beckett – *CEO, Jackson Municipal Airport Authority*
Jeff Rent – *President/CEO, Greater Jackson Chamber Partnership*

A series of one-on-one interviews were then undertaken to gain insights from all Visit Jackon staff, Board members, political leaders and key industry representatives. Concurrently, an analysis of both existing research by Visit Jackson and new market research including a visitor profile survey, a LeadDESTINATION survey which considered City of Jackson tourism products and experiences, and a LeadDO survey which investigated the Visit Jackson organization and its partnerships were initiated and results reviewed.

Findings from these efforts were consolidated into a “State of the Destination” presentation, which was delivered in November 2025 to Visit Jackson staff, the Visit Jackson Board of Directors and to the Steering Committee, with feedback gained from all three groups.

With findings and conclusions from the State of the Destination analysis and the associated feedback, the long-term plan elements were developed, including refined Mission and Vision statements, a series of Strategic Plan Pillars, Objectives and Strategies. These were reviewed with Visit Jackson senior staff and the Board of Directors in February and March 2026, respectively, and thereafter the strategic plan fully documented.



Immersion Tour & Board/ Staff Workshops

One-on-One Stakeholder Interviews as needed

Stakeholder input Sessions as needed

Destination Assessments given past/new research and plans

DMO Evaluation

LeadDO and LeadDestination survey analyses

Intergration of Key findings

State of the Destination summary

Critical issues identification and/or confirmation

Consensus building around critical issues and challenges

Destination vision and DMO Mission/Priority Goal statements

Strategies and tactical steps to address critical issues/challenges

KPI/Metrics to evaluate progress

Plan communications strategies

3.0 STATE OF THE DESTINATION

3.1 Tourism Accomplishments, Issues and Destination Performance

Based on discussions with the Visit Jackson Board and staff members, the key accomplishments of the city's destination development and tourism marketing efforts over the past five years are recorded below:

- A proactive destination brand marketing program that also heightened city resident recognition.
- Assertive local tourism advocacy increased visibility and respectability.
- Completed the Destination Master Plan with full coverage on tourism-related development and placemaking.
- An enhanced relationship between the City of Jackson and Visit Jackson.
- Increased event/festival support and success (e.g., National Folk Festival)
- Acknowledgement of new award-winning leisure/culinary tourism campaigns.

In addition to these, the interviews highlighted a variety of thematic issues, both encouraging and concerning, that were frequently heard including:

Encouraging

- Embracing DLO mantle – expanded roles of Visit Jackson positioning it as a true Destination Leadership
- Impressive expanded roles of CVB/DMO – advocacy outreach has increased responsibilities, and prominence and embrace by community and city leadership.
- Close alignment with City – Mayor Horhn's tourism background and strong connection to CVB/DMO is an important asset for the industry.
- Completion of Destination Master Plan - an important step with need now to focus on implementation.
- "Let It Shine" campaign has personalized Jackson – by personalizing Jackson, have connected with prospects on a deeper level with point of pride for locals.
- Cultural assets are a strong competitive advantage – depth and breadth of cultural assets is a strong differentiator.
- Outdoor recreation and trails – greater opportunity with outdoor experiences with Parks and Trail Forum as a good first step.
- Moderate costs of destination – a big plus and key in attracting targeted group business.
- Expanded role with Thalia Mara Hall – strong potential for expanded utilization of facility and role in visitor industry.



Concerning

- Lack of lodging diversity – aging nature of much of inventory limits overnight visitor attraction with impetus to spur on new development.
- More competition from suburbs – newer and highly competitive hotel product, retail and dining experiences.
- Safety and security issues – true threat to visitors is overblown, but perception is reality in a visitor's mind.
- Corporate meeting growth potential - as downtown has lost its vibrancy (dining, nightlife, shopping, etc.) much more attention to attract business segments is needed.
- Large convention hotel for increased group growth – substantial investment to make it a reality but increased local/regional interest is apparent.
- Visitor flow management – due to dispersed nature of tourism assets, sometimes requires visitors to travel through disreputable areas.
- In-depth insights can be gained by evaluating recent destination and Visit Jackson performance, looking specifically at hotel and lodging performance.
- Wayfinding in the Capital City (downtown/convention district)

There are currently 3,775 rooms within the City of Jackson boundaries. The Advisory Team, in conjunction with Visit Jackson staff, allocated these properties into five categories, with an associated example of properties that would fit into each. Of key concern, 58% of the current inventory is made up of lower end properties that do not provide the caliber of experiences many of today's travelers expect. The significant number of these lower tier properties helps to stimulate many regional visitors to choose options in suburban areas, rather than within the city. Reflective of this reality, hotels in the City of Jackson attract approximately one-third of the hotel demand in the broader Jackson MSA, the other two- thirds are drawn to options in surrounding suburban areas.

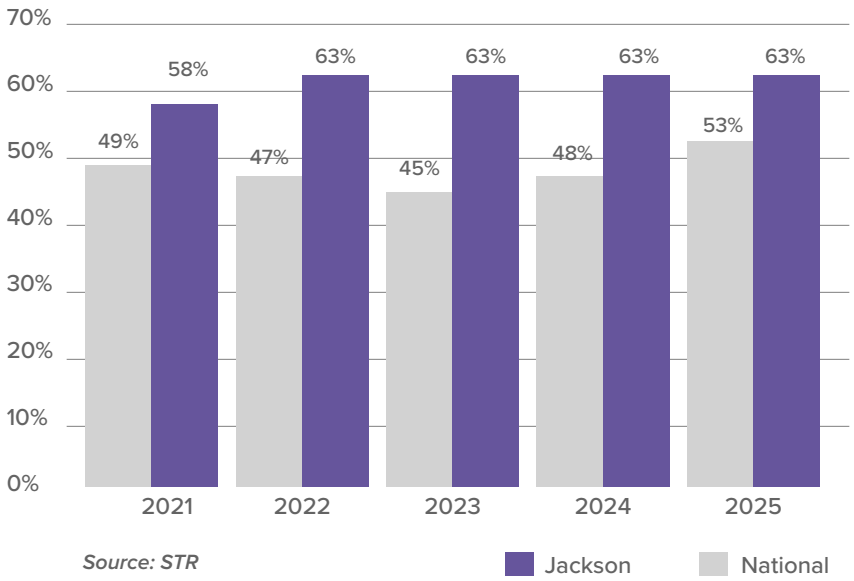
ACCOMMODATION TYPE	UNITS	% OF UNITS
UPPER UPPER (WESTIN)	256	7%
UPPER (RESIDENCE INN)	799	21%
UPPER MID (HAMPTON INN)	520	14%
LOWER MID (SUPER 8)	456	12%
LOWER LOWER (OYO JACKSON)	1744	46%
TOTAL	3775	100%

Source: STR, NTG/DCG, Visit Jackson

"City hotels derive only 1/3rd of demand from Jackson MSA overnight lodging business."

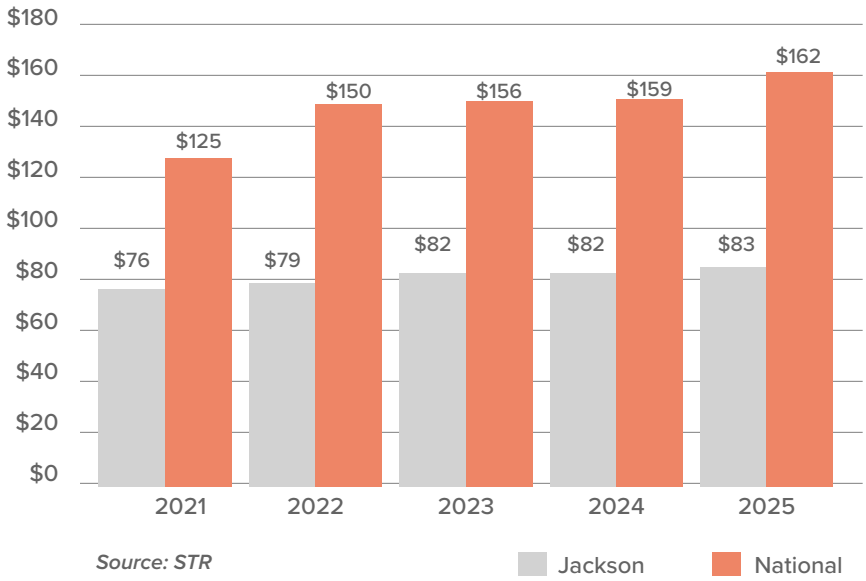


This large percentage of lower tier properties has also impacted overall occupancy performance. When occupancy levels between the years of 2021 and 2024 within the City of Jackson are compared to national norms, the city has experienced occupancy performance on average 14 points below national norms. Importantly,though, Jackson saw significant improvement in occupancy levels in 2025, increasing 5 points in this one year alone.



Source: STR

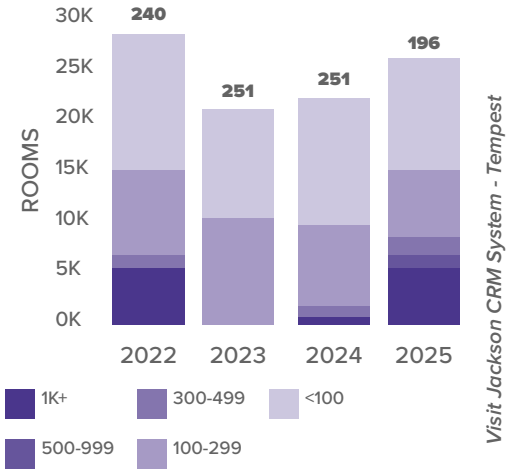
These lower tier properties have also led to the City of Jackson achieving average daily rates (ADRs) significantly below national norms. In 2025, the City's $83 ADR average was approximately one-half that of national norms.



Source: STR

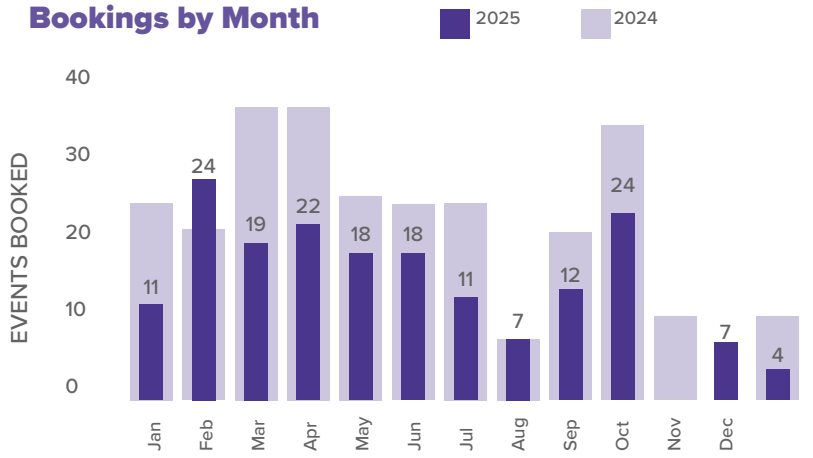
Another indicator of performance is consideration of the number of group events and their associated number of room nights generated. When considering performance in both 2024 and 2025, the number of event bookings in 2025 (196) were below 2024 (251) in all months except February. While a lower number of events were attracted in 2025, Visit Jackson was successful in attracting events with a larger size in 2025. These larger groups resulted in a significantly higher number of room nights booked in 2025.

Definite Room Nights



Visit Jackson CRM System - Tempest

Bookings by Month



Visit Jackson CRM System - Tempest

When considering these findings, a variety of critical issues are noted:

- *Much of Jackon's aging hotel inventory does not meet today's visitor expectations.*
- *Proactive steps to transition older properties to new uses are needed.*
- *Jackson has significantly underperformed national norms, but important performance improvement was experienced in 2025.*
- *Increased growth of larger groups was achieved in 2025, leading to more room nights for area hotels.*
- *There is a strong need to attract more long-staying overnight visitors, both corporate and leisure.*

3.2 Visitor Behavior Situation

When considering who is attracted to Jackson as visitors, insights can be gained by investigating findings from Azira, a location intelligence platform using in-destination cell phone data.

As shown in the chart, visitors to Jackson stayed an average of 2.1 days, almost 25% above 2024 performance, with an associated increase in the percentage choosing to stay overnight. Importantly, visitors to Jackson are very loyal, with 67% being repeat visitors to the destination.

Year	2024	2025
Avg Length of stay	1.7 days	2.1 days
% Overnight	75	79
% Repeat	64	67

Source: Azira

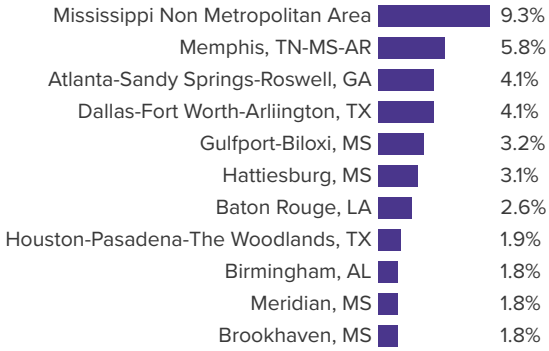
One of the key factors influencing the increased length of stay in 2025, was the successful generation of visitors from farther distances. These longer-haul visitors are more likely to choose Jackson as an overnight stay, rather than a day visit. In 2025, 24% of visitors resided in an area more than 500 miles away from Jackson, a level 31% above 2024's level of 18%. Visitors residing between 250 and 499 miles also increased from 24 to 30%.

Year	2024	2025
% 50-249 Miles	58	46
% 250-499 Miles	24	30
% 500+ Miles	18	24

Source: Azira

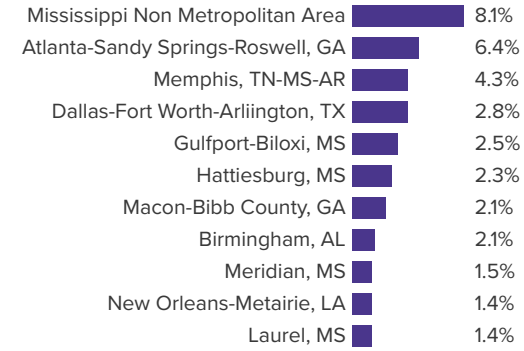
When looking more specifically at the Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) where visitors resided, Mississippi Non-Statistical Areas dropped from 9% in 2024 to 8% in 2025, while the longer haul destination of Atlanta increased from 4 to 6%. Continued tracking of geo-location data should be used in future determination of marketing/promotional deployments and messaging.

Top Visitor Origin MSAs 2024



Source: Azira

Top Visitor Origin MSAs 2025



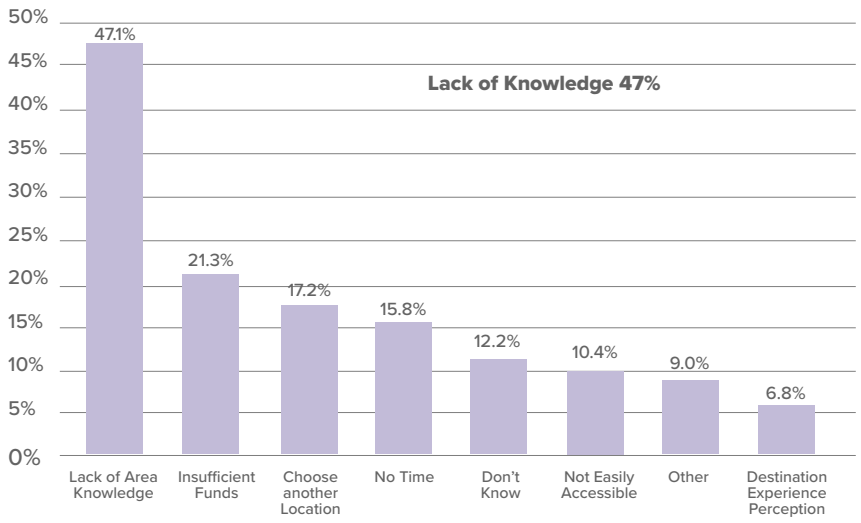
Source: Azira

A new visitor profile survey was undertaken as part of the strategic planning exercise. Visit Jackson's lead database, made up of current and prospective visitors who connected with the organization and left their email addresses, was utilized as the sample. This provided insights on how future prospects who were familiar with the destination perceived the destination and their interest to travel. The 35-question survey was administered over a three-week period ending November 15, 2025.

A total of 375 responses were received, 155 of which had actually visited Jackson and 220 who had reached out but not traveled to the destination. While a moderate sample size, the findings are still believed to give important insights as to both actual and prospective visitor attitudes.

The approximate 60% of leads who had not followed through and visited Jackson is higher than in many other destinations and therefore understanding what factors influenced their decision not to travel is important. As shown in the graphic, 47% of these prospects noted it was their lack of knowledge that most prominently influenced their lack of visit. While concerning, this factor is also positive as there is a strong potential to convert these prospects in the future if additional outreach and education was provided. Also important, less than 7% noted the destination experience perception as a factor for not visiting, thus indicating a generally positive perception of the destination.

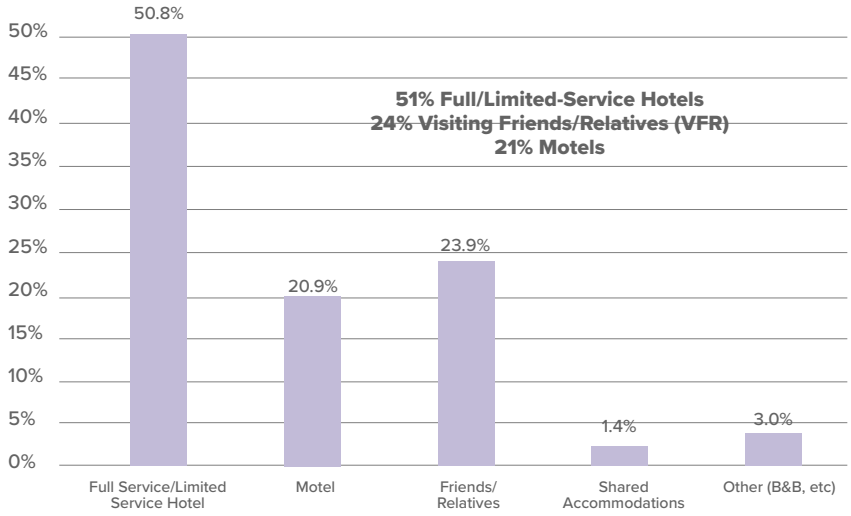
Potential Visitor Reason for Not Visiting Jackson MS Area



Source: 2025 Visitor Profile Survey

A total of 68% of visitors noted that Jackson was their primary destination, while 32% noted that other locations were of primary interest, including the Florida Panhandle and other Mississippi destinations. Overnight visitors stayed an average of 2.7 nights, a level somewhat higher than the geo-location data average, indicating those visitors who have connected and engaged with Visit Jackson stayed for a longer period of time. The average day visitor stayed an average of 11.9 hours, a duration longer than many other destinations, indicating a strong potential to convert to an overnight visitor if they were shown in advance the diversity of experiences and accommodations available in the destination.

Type of Accommodation Used



Source: 2025 Visitor Profile Survey

Overnight visitors most frequently choose full service or limited-service hotels (51%), with those visiting friends and relatives (VFR) being the next highest at 23%. This demonstrates how Jackson residents are actually an important part of the "sales force" selling Jackson and more could potentially be done to activate these residents to increasingly invite their friends and family.

The repeat orientation of visitors was clear as only 31% were a first-time visitor. Those visiting once before made up an additional 30%, twice at 19% and three plus times at another 19%. When visitors were asked about their likelihood to return on a future visit, 59% said they were very likely to return and an additional 25% said likely to return. This strong repeat attraction shows the loyalty of Jackson visitors, but also reinforces the need to continually show "what's new" in the destination, giving them a reason to return.

Top Visitor Activities

Dining	54	Entertainment/Nightlife	15
Shopping	39	Visiting Museums	14
Sightseeing	27	Visiting Parks and Trails	11
Arts/Cultural	22	Festivals, Fairs, Concerts	11
VFR	19	Hospital/Medical Services	10
Historic Sites	17		

Source: 2025 Visitor Profile Survey

When questioning visitors on what they did while in the destination, like almost every other destination in the country, the top three responses were dining, shopping and sightseeing. Importantly the next highest was Arts/Cultural at 22%, with an additional 17% noting Historical/Heritage Sites and 14% visiting Museums. This collective performance shows how dominant these cultural and historic elements of the destination are, and demonstrates how this sector is truly a strong "competitive advantage" of the destination. While performing strong, Visit Jackson should still question if more could be done to truly leverage and showcase these assets to their true potential. One additional activity that should be noted is that 11% noted taking in parks and trails in the region. While a lower percentage, many visitors attracted to arts and cultural elements also integrate nature based experiences in their travel experience. It is believed that a greater affiliation of these nature based experiences could be a strong element that helps reinforce the cultural competitive advantage of the destination.

Respondents were more fully probed as to their satisfaction and awareness of the various attractions and events in Jackson. When sorted by satisfaction level, the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum was the most highly rated at 4.12 on a 1-5 scale with 5 being highest satisfaction. Many of the other Jackson cultural institutions were also very highly rated. However, the strong opportunity to introduce and stimulate others to take in these attractions is evident, as a relatively large percentage of visitors were aware of the attractions but did not visit. Even more significant, approximately up to 65% of visitors were not aware of these very significant attractions, showing the strong potential to connect and engage with a much larger percentage of Jackson visitors. Marketing and promotion of the full diversity of cultural and historic attractions should not only be a role of Visit Jackson, but also of the attractions themselves utilizing the LeFleur Museum District as a great example of the institutions themselves cross-selling each other.

Top Jackson MS Area Attractions/Events Ratings

Attraction	Visitor Rating	% Aware	% Unaware
MS Civil Rights Museum	4.12	27	51
Museum of MS History	4.10	25	51
MS Children's Museum	4.08	16	64
MS Museum of Natural Science	4.06	17	62
MS Museum of Art	4.01	22	55

Source: 2025 Visitor Profile Survey

When visitors were asked what they enjoyed most and least on their Jackson visit in an "open ended" question format, the most frequently noted element they enjoyed was the diversity of unique dining and food options, followed by the broad range of cultural and heritage experiences. The frequent reality of major road construction and crime and safety concerns were the top two most noted elements that were least enjoyed in the destination.

Open Ended Responses - Most/Least Enjoyed

Most Enjoyed		Least Enjoyed	
Unique Dining/Food	75+	Major Road Construction	50+
Variety of Cultural/Heritage	50+	Crime & Safety Concerns	40+
Destination Atmosphere	30+	Downtown Blight	25+
Family/Friends Reconnection	20+	Nothing	25+

Source: 2025 Visitor Profile Survey

When respondents were asked what enhancements would make their Jackson experience more attractive, more vibrant Downtown dining and shopping was most frequently noted, followed by increased law enforcement, upgrades to the Zoological Park and expansion of parks and hiking trails.

A more expansive set of findings from the survey effort can be found in a separate report available from Visit Jackson.

Attractions/Facilities/Services Suggested to Enhance the Jackson MS Area Experience

Top 4 by Number Mentions

More Vibrant Downtown Foodservice and Shopping Experience

Increased Law Enforcement Presence Downtown

Jackson Zoological Park Reinvestment/Upgrading

Expansion of Parks and Hiking Trails

Considering these findings, the following *critical issues* are to be considered:

- Important success in drawing more overnight visitors from farther feeder markets was achieved in 2025 so how do we build on future success.
- Need further refinement of visitor targets and specific initiatives to speak and motivate them.
- Too many prospects that Visit Jackson has touched have not visited so how do we stimulate more to try.
- Need to speak to factors cited as converting daytrippers to overnight.
- Visiting friends & relatives is an important segment so how can we entice residents to invite/encourage more to stay.
- Enhancing past visitors to understand what's new to stimulate more repeat visitation.
- Ability to highlight the most liked factors of visitors and address factors liked least.

3.3 Experience Development Evaluation

Visit Jackson undertook an important tourism study with its Destination Master Plan developed in 2024. This study investigated the range of existing Jackson tourism/hospitality products and experiences, benchmarked them to other competitive destinations and developed a range of recommendations including lodging, hospitality services, conference facilities, youth & amateur sports, retail & dining, art & cultural assets and other destination appeals.

10 year Destination Master Plan recommendations

	Lodging & Hospitality	Conference & Meeting Facilities	Youth & Amateur Sports	Retail & Dining Nodes	Festivals & Events	Arts & Culture	Parks, Trails & Outdoor Space
Opportunity	Strong	Good	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
1 Short Term (1-5 YEARS)	**Headquarters Hotel**	**Headquarters Hotel**	**JSU Stadium Relocation**	**Reestablish downtown jackson as core dining & shopping node**	**Music/Event Venue in Downtown**	**Farish Street Historical District**	**Link Jackson Museum District with Downtown Jackson**
2 Medium Term (5-10 YEARS)	Plan for reuse of old Marriott Hotel	Convention Center Mixed-Use District Plan	Sports-Driven District around JSU Stadium w/ Connectivity to CC District	Walkable Dining offerings for Museum District patrons	Continued push of Culinary & Music-driven Events	Support LeFleur Museum District build-out & Commercial Rail-train Infusion	Downtown Green Space with activated Dining/Retail surroundings
3 Long Term (10-20 YEARS)	Extended stay Property in Downtown	Execution of Convention Center Mixed-use Plan	Improvement of Smith Wills & North Jackson Youth Baseball into cohesive Sports Destination	Connectivity between Core Nodes	**Expand on Events in Core areas of differentiation (e.g. Ballet)**	Alignment among core institutions to create a cohesive package to sell to visitors	**Pearl River Activation**

Source: 2024 Destination Master Plan



While the report identified a broad range of opportunities, it is important to recognize that Visit Jackson as an organization has a limited range of both staffing and fiscal resources to implement these recommendations and thus this plan focuses on areas that could most likely move forward with the likely available partnership resources.

As part of the planning process, additional analysis of Jackson destination products and experiences were investigated through distribution of a LeadDESTINATION survey to Jackson industry professionals. This survey utilized 80 tourism development and stakeholder relations strategy and best practice standards across ten industry and community sectors. While there were limited responses to the survey, the findings are believed to provide useful insights. The factors most favorably rated (on a 1-5 Likert scale) related to the diverse range of food & beverage related offerings, the quality and range of cultural and heritage products, the strong brand identity of the destination and the presence of a stand-alone convention/conference facility.

Areas that received the least favorable evaluations were the absence of an independent sports commission and associated lack of a dedicated sports development fund, limited workforce development efforts and a lack of a separate lodging/hotel association.

LeadDESTINATION Survey Preliminary Stakeholder Results Summary

Most Favorable Benchmark Evaluation (out of a 5-point Likert scale score)

- Unique local food & beverage offerings
- Core of destination/visitor-related restaurants
- Annual program of cultural, heritage and arts events
- Community/destination has a tourism/brand positioning and identity that is promoted
- Community/destination has a reputable critical mass of cultural/heritage attractions
- Standalone convention/conference or public assembly center in place

Least Favorable Benchmark Evaluation (out of a 5-point Likert scale score)

- No independent sports commission/authority to work with DO
- No sports event tourism development fund
- No deliverable destination branded customer service/ excellence program
- DO isn't active in workforce development
- Minimal understanding by lodging sector of DO purpose and responsibilities
- No lodging/hotel association or group



When looking at the most influential attractions and experiences in Jackson, resources like Trip Advisor can provide insights as it is one of the most frequently used platforms used by visitors when planning their trips. Trip Advisor ranks Jackson attractions using a mix of quality, recency and quantity of visitor reviews. As shown in their ranking, the vast majority of highly ranked attractions are museums and historic sites, reinforcing the competitive advantage findings in Section 3.2.

How Trip Advisor Ranks Jackson Attractions

- Ranking based on quality, recency and quantity of reviews.
- Dominance of museums and historic sites is clear.
- Are we effectively communicating this competitive advantage?

Source: Trip Advisor

1	Mississippi State Capitol	Historic Sites
2	Mississippi Civil Rights Museum	Museums
3	Mississippi Museum of Natural Science	Museums
4	Medgar Evers Home	Historic Sites
5	Mississippi Children's Museum	Museums
6	Eudora Welty House and Garden	Museums
7	Mississippi Museum of Art	Museums
8	Old Capitol Museum	Museums
9	LeFleur's Bluff State Park	State Park
10	Mississippi Agriculture & Forestry Museum	Museums
11	Museum of Mississippi History	Museums
12	Cathead Distillery	Distillery
13	Mynelle Gardens	Gardens
14	Jackson State University	Educational Sites
15	Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame	Museums

While highly rated, the lack of awareness of many visitors also noted in Section 3.2 showcases the potential if increased awareness of these cultural and historic attractions were achieved. As previously noted, the LeFleur Museum District has effectively integrated the various institutions, providing a District Pass with collective ticketing and cross-selling of the various attractions.

The Destination Master Plan also recognized greater potential for this thematic segment and recommended the development of a cohesive Museum Citywide District Package that collectively branded and marketed the many cultural institutions located throughout the City of Jackson. Suggested itineraries, linkages showing how to experience, and ease of ticketing could all lead to an enhanced embrace of the diverse offerings throughout Jackson.

Create a Cohesive Museum District Package

Support, prioritize and develop plans to build a cohesive marketing and branding package of the many cultural institutions in Jackson. These plans should include itineraries for people to seamlessly experience the city's cultural institutions and discover Jackson's rich makeup.

Source: 2024 Destination Master Plan

When considering the influence and importance of various Jackson tourism related products, the mix of attraction attendance between visitors and residents can provide important insights as to which are truly speaking to Jackson visitors. When considering geo-location data of the various products, one can see experiences like the Smith Robinson Museum, the Jackson Convention Complex and the MS Museum of Art attract the largest percentage of their visitation from visitors, ranging from 58 to 75%. Visitors make up a much smaller percentage of attendance for attractions like the District at Eastover, the Jackson Zoo and Mynelle Gardens Arboretum.

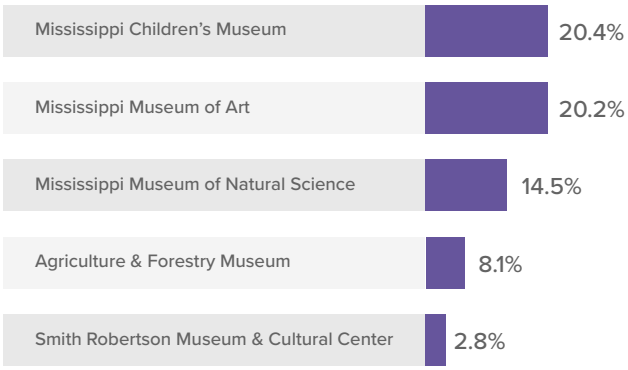
Variance in Visitor vs Resident Attraction

Attractions	% Visitors	% Jackson Residents	% Visitors Overnight
Smith Robertson Museum	75	25	90
Jackson Convention Complex	66	33	73
MS Museum of Art	58	42	84
Civil Rights Museum & Museum of MS History	51	49	81
Fairgrounds Complex	50	50	66
Thalia Mara Hall	41	59	82
MS Museum of Natural Science	37	63	69
Agriculture & Forestry Musuem	32	68	66
MS Children's Museum	28	72	71
The District at Eastover	24	76	81
The Jackson Zoo	18	82	81
Mynelle Gardens Arboretum	12	88	100

Source: Symphony and Near

While the range of cultural and heritage attractions in Jackson is clearly a key competitive advantage for the destination, it is clear there is more that can be done to deepen their penetration of visitor attractions. Again, considering the geo-location data from Symphony and Near, the highest visitor penetrating attraction is the Civil Rights Museum and Museum of History, with almost 40% of visitors taking in this attraction. Others are attracting a much smaller percentage of visitors, with in many instances only 15 to 20% of visitors actually taking in the experiences. This showcases the opportunity to increase awareness and interest of these key attractions to a wider range of Jackson visitors.

Museum Visitor Penetration



Source: Symphony and Near

Another critically important area of product development focus should be the diversification of lodging products. As presented in Section 3.1, 58% of current Jackson hotel inventory are made up of lower end properties that do not provide the caliber of experiences many of today's travelers expect. While there is a range of newer products being developed in the region, they are largely being attracted to the surrounding areas, outside of the City of Jackson boundaries. Thus, while Jackson has the potential to attract a larger number of overnight visitors, if a large percent continues to choose lodging options outside the city, much of the important hotel, food & beverage and retail expenditures are lost to these competing alternatives.

While The Destination Master Plan called out the importance of attracting a large convention hotel connected to the Convention Complex, they also noted that attraction of additional boutique hotel and select service hotel properties was a future opportunity. Proactive steps should be taken with hotel development entities to present the opportunities and benefits of building new properties in the City of Jackson. Additionally, efforts to transition many of the older hotel properties to alternative uses should be pursued to help change the identity of Jackson to a more updated and inviting mix of lodging offerings.

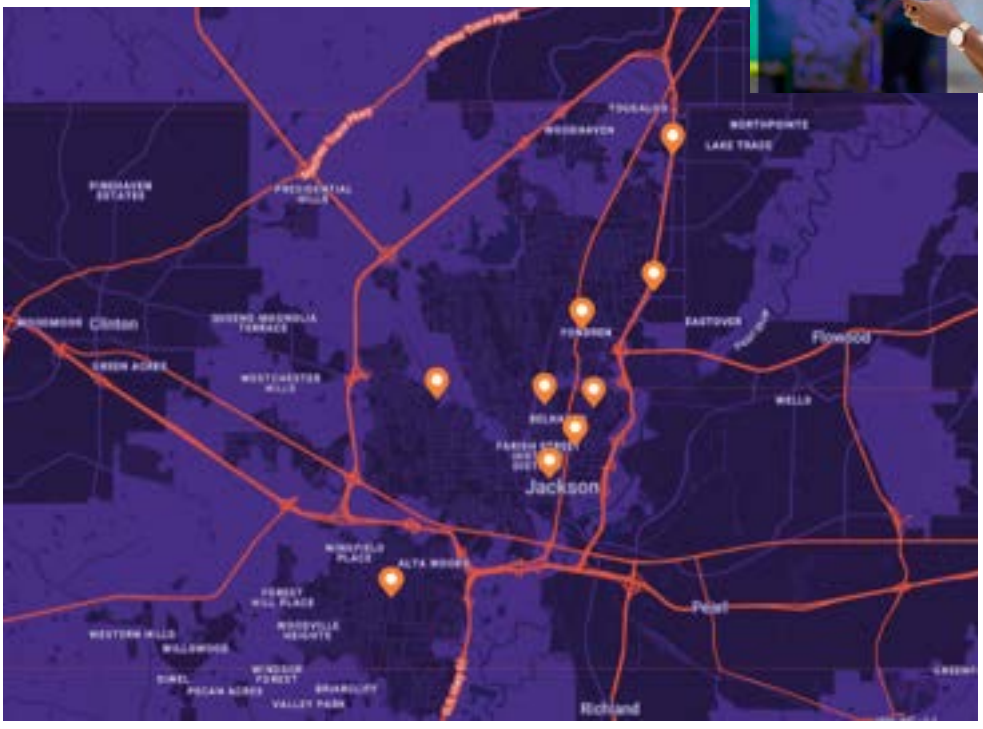
A final factor to consider in relation to Jackson's many visitor products and experiences is the spread-out nature of them throughout the city, rather than a concentrated focus in a limited number of areas. Therefore, visitors have to move through and around the city, a process that can be confusing for many. Through simplified maps, consistent signage, and expanded showcasing of key neighborhoods, an enhanced visitor flow management can be achieved.

Recommendations & Destination Strategy

Significant Need for a Connected Convention Center Headquarters Hotel

- Jackson currently lacks a headquarters hotel that is connected to the Jackson Convention Center Complex. Almost all of the competitive markets have an attached hotel with its own function space.
- Improving the overall perception of the destination is critical to increasing occupancy and rate at the hotels in Jackson.
- An upscale, boutique hotel and additional select service properties are future opportunities in downtown Jackson.





Considering the findings of Section 3.3, the following critical issues are to be considered:

- *Many new development opportunities were identified in the recently completed Destination Master Plan, but Visit Jackson staffing and fiscal resources must be considered in prioritization.*
- *Increased linkages among museums, arts and cultural experiences could elevate visitor embrace.*
- *Proactive recruitment efforts with the city economic development partner should be undertaken to attract more selective developments to Jackson rather than suburbs.*
- *New ways to help direct visitors to understand how to get around and in Jackson is needed.*

3.4 DMO/DLO Vitality Status

When considering the Visit Jackson organization itself, a variety of achievements were often noted in talking with both staff and community leaders, including:

- Longevity of staff with institutional knowledge with many employees being with the organization for many years, bringing deep understanding of the destination and organization,

- Increased recognition and value in broader community connections with expanded community outreach efforts over the last number of years resulting in greater community embrace,

- Very strong relationships with City leadership with Mayor having close ties to the visitor industry and enhanced partnering with the city being attained, and

- Full embrace of the DLO (Destination Leadership Organization) mandate with Visit Jackson increasingly playing a community leader role.

To provide additional insights to how the organization can be even more effective, a LeadDO survey which considered 15 benchmark areas covering 142 standards/best practices was completed by the five-person Visit Jackson senior leadership team.

The seven most important standards noted for adoption included:

Marketing, Sales and Advocacy Communications

1. Formulation and activation of detailed priority visitor segment marketing/sales strategies (meeting/convention, sports event, arts/cultural heritage, other leisure segments, etc.).
2. Development and implementation of visiting friends & relatives (VFR) and day visitor conversion programs.
3. Preparation and execution of a formalized audience-based tourism advocacy/community relations plan

Operations and Administration

4. Agreement and deployment of a multi-year research and intelligence program (brand positioning/promise, visitor motivation/behavior, stakeholder and resident sentiment, tourism economic impact, etc.).
5. Need for a long-term DLO financial strategy including new funding sources and attainment.
6. Agreed-to investment in a DLO human resources strategy and plan including professional development programming.
7. Enhanced Board of Directors governance engagement and allied value proposition.

Of key importance of the organization effectively moving forward is its endurance of sustainable funding. In the last two years, the organization has operated with a budget in the $5.4 million range.

A 1% restaurant tax generated approximately $3 million annually, with the city's transient lodging tax allocation generating another $440,000. Since the pandemic, a mix of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) resources provided another $1.8 million. These ARPA funds thus accounted for approximately one-third of the annual resources. Of the tax generated resources, the restaurant tax accounted for 86 % of resources.

ARPA fund resources terminate at the end of August 2026, thus development of another source of funding will be critical to ensure the organization has an ongoing resource base to continue its historical role. One potential source is an increase in the City of Jackson's lodging tax. Hotels currently charge an 11% "check out" rate on overnight stays along with a $.75 daily charge. This levy is approximately 3% points below national norms and thus there is the potential to increase this levy, while still staying competitive on a national level.

A 1% increase in the lodging tax would generate approximately $440,000 annually and a .5% increase in the restaurant tax would generate approximately $1.6 million. Collectively, these incremental resources would more than equal the funding previously provided through ARPA funding. To place these resources in context, if deployment of these incremental funds allowed the city's hotels in the destination to increase their average occupancy level from 2025's level of 53% to 57% (moving closer to national norm of 63%) and its average daily rate from $83 to $100, (still below the national norm of $162) an additional $200,000 of tax revenue would be generated.

VJ Annual Funding

	2025	2026	2025%	2026%
Restaurant Tax	$3,075,418	$3,157,378	86%	58%
Occ Tax	$431,132	$442,622	12%	8%
Other	$134,307	$70,500	2%	1%
Subtotal	$3,640,857	$3,670,500	100%	67%
ARPA	$1,765,312	$1,770,039		33%
Total	$5,406,169	$5,440,539		100%

State of Mississippi Sales Tax Rate	7%
City of Jackson Bed Tax Rate	4%
City of Jackson	$.75
Check Out Rate	11%+
National Average Lodging Tax Rate	14.2%
National Median Lodging Tax Rate	14%



An important two-day Visit Jackson Board of Directors retreat was held in August 2025 and a wide range of topics and priorities were discussed. One of the factors that received broad support was the need for a deepened role of Board members in helping direct and oversee the organization. This would require strong Board member involvement that went beyond attending meetings. While reinforcing that the Board needs to stay at a top oversight level, there were a variety of ideas on how they could become more closely connected with staff and their activities, whether attending industry functions, or jointly reporting of key accomplishments of various departments. The Board also questioned if there were certain expertise areas that were currently not represented on the Board, including finance, real estate development, or other areas and how wider representation could be achieved.

Another area of discussion related to current staffing resources and their associated focus areas. There were questions as to if they still were appropriately deployed given both current roles of the organization and more importantly, the skill sets needed for priorities noted in the forthcoming strategic plan.

Executive Office
Rickey L. Thigpen
Laura Vogelsang

Administration
Jennifer Chance
Amy Dillard
Tiffany Lawson

Marketing
Jonathan Pettus
Yolanda Clay-Moore
Paul Wolf
Kim Lewis
Allyson Durr

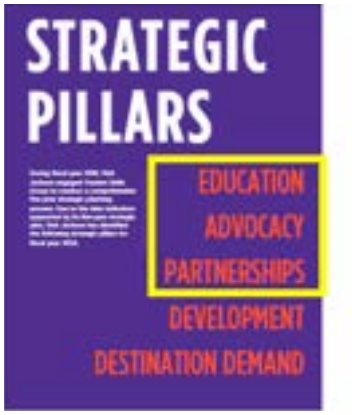
Sales
Shun Hatten
Floyd Williams, Jr.
Sherri Ratliff
Shana Smith
Shanda Brown

Services
Christine Blackmon
Amber Campbell

Considering the findings of Section 3.4, the following critical issues are to be considered:

- *The plan should revisit Vision and Mission statements to ensure they reflect today's realities and prepare an inclusive destination vision.*
- *New Visit Jackson organizational standards should be addressed and prioritized.*
- *Visit Jackson organization roles vis-a-vis internal community and external visitor priorities must be clarified.*
- *Proactive steps to increase lodging and restaurant tax rates should be pursued with clear rationale (both visitor and resident). Contingency planning regarding budgetary changes should seriously be undertaken as a safeguard.*
- *Additional engagement and success metrics direction from Board of Directors would help guide strategic direction.*
- *Increased collaboration among Visit Jackson staff and respective roles should be pursued to ensure optimizing cooperative roles.*

3.5 Community Connections Appraisal



One of the areas in which there was strong consensus was the successful efforts of stronger community integration in recent years. Through the efforts of Visit Jackson leadership, connections and organizational roles in the community have been achieved. Past strategic planning efforts showcased these priorities with three of its pillars oriented to external community connections.

It's important to note that broader national industry trends have moved in this direction, with similar organizations placing increased priorities not just on connections with external visitors, but also with internal residents and community leadership. While many organizations around the nation are beginning to move in this direction, Visit Jackson has already made important strides.

The successes of expanded community connections were evident in survey efforts undertaken in the 2024's Destination Master Plan. As part of that planning effort, a Resident Sentiment Survey was undertaken, which questioned Jackson residents on their attitudes and impressions of the role of Jackson's visitor industry and Visit Jackson itself. Rather than growing levels of resident opposition to expanded attraction of visitors that many destinations around the country are experiencing, Jackson residents possessed very favorable attitudes towards the industry. Over 80% of respondents rated tourism as either "very or extremely important" to the Jackson economy. Additionally, an even higher 88% noted they believed tourism contributed to the diversity of Jackson.

864
Total survey responses received

Over 80%
of residents rated tourism as extremely important or very important to the Jackson economy

88%
of residents agreed or strongly agreed that tourism contributes to the diversity of Jackson

These views were acknowledged in the previously noted July 2025 Board retreat, however some questioned what the appropriate mix between external visitor connections versus internal resident involvement was, particularly with potential changes in funding resources.

Considering the findings of Section 3.5, the following critical issues are noted:

- *Visit Jackson is already ahead in their community outreach efforts.*
- *Important strategies and tactical steps have already been made to build on community engagement expansion.*
- *Real need is for increased clarity on what should be prioritized from a community engagement perspective, who is responsible and how these efforts may reinforce more core marketing, sales and support roles.*
- *Agreed-to metrics and subsequent measurables should be identified to help demonstrate effectiveness and expected outcomes which will be further discussed in the next subsection.*

3.6 Destination/DLO Accountability Review

Analyses from the LeadDO and Destination International's series of Destination / OrganizationNEXT future studies provide solid evidence that visitor destinations and their respective destination organizations are increasing accountable regarding tourism impacts and the operating performance of DLO programming. Destination marketing and management activities receive more attention as tourism investments with expected returns. This then requires a robust tourism research strategy with an appropriate budget allocation to provide both the quantitative and qualitative data needed to evaluate destination and DLO success. Typically, cost-benefit analysis is undertaken to obtain relevant, measurable information for assessing direct visitor, travel trade and resident opinions and behavioral results.



From these primary and secondary sources, the following critical issues are noted:

- *Full agreement must be sought on the best customized destination and DLO metrics (key performance indicators) for the Jackson jurisdiction.*
- *Approval attained for the related quantitative and qualitative measures to be used across the destination and DLO domains.*
- *Prepare a strategic research program to support the timing and implementation of the strategic plan's priority initiatives.*
- *Continued better use and adaptation of Tourism Economics' Symphony Platform performance scorecard by Visit Jackson.*
- *Develop an integrated contact database for Visit Jackson to efficiently and effectively connect with current and prospective visitors, industry and community stakeholders and travel trade planners and organizers to increase conversion.*

3.7 DestinationNEXT Future Implications

Over the past 20 years, Destinations International has supported the destination organization industry through destination marketing and management futures studies. Since 2016, there have been three progressive major iterations of DestinationNEXT research and two additional reports - 2020 OrganizationNEXT and 2024 Destination Promotion: A Catalyst for Community Viability with transformational opportunities identified below.



2016

Dealing with the New Marketplace	+	Building & Protecting the Destination Brand	+	Evolving the Destination Organization Business Model
Broadcast to Engagement		Destination Management		Collaboration and Partnerships

2020

Community Building	+	Customer Engagement	+	Organization Sustainability
Experience and Stakeholder Refit		Promotion and Sales Pivot		Entity Reset

2023

Destination Development	+	Community Alignment	+	Organization Funding Retention
Authentic Brand Experiences and Priority Setting		Continued Relationship Building and Placemaking		ROI and Supplemental Initiatives

2024

Destination Investment	+	Tourism Development	+	Government Services Support
Direct Media Promotion and Multiplier Factor Returns with Brand Marketing Halo Effect		Higher Quality of Place and Life Through Economic Development and Talent Attraction		Increased Resident Recognition and New Community Employment Growth

2025

Destination Sustainable Wealth	+	Tourism Promotion	+	Organization Capacity Building
New Tourism Investment and Placemaking		AI Application and Authentic Transformative Experiences		Appropriate Funding, Workforce Engagement and Continued ROI Focus

From this DestinationNEXT/OrganizationNEXT research (2016, 2023, and 2025), and the 2024 Destination Promotion report, the top 10 new directions in destination marketing and management are as follows and should be considered:

- *Increased engagement with community leadership and residents*
- *Heightened community/stakeholder involvement through an executable tourism advocacy strategy*
- *Formation and implementation of a research-based brand strategy combining destination, community and related promotional entities*
- *Execution of an integrated online/offline destination promotion/sales program with conversion measurement*
- *Increased involvement in placemaking and visitor experience/tourism development*
- *Long-term tourism destination and DMO economic, social and environmental stewardship for community health and wealth creation*
- *Higher accountability on tourism investment understanding and results*
- *Additional destination/DMO attribute evaluation focus on health and safety, EDI, AI, emergency preparedness, and sustainability and resilience*
- *Full recognition of tourism promotional investment leading to economic development and talent attraction halo effects*
- *Increased resident understanding of visitor impacts and allied government services support.*

It should be noted that many of these new directions have been recognized by Visit Jackson and acted upon over the past few years.

3.8 Main Destination / DLO Challenges

Based on the preceding State of the Destination analyses and critical issues identified, the main six destination/ DLO challenges are:

1. New/replacement funding is needed because ARPA financial support ends this fiscal year on August 31, 2026 - crucial that new funds be advocated for in the first half of 2026, aligned with the pending resident tourism and tax campaign.
2. Visit Jackson staff burnout due to increased workload - ensure the correct staff complement with appropriately assigned responsibilities.
3. Determination of Visit Jackson's new priority initiatives - based on an approved formalized five-year strategic plan.
4. Development of further transient accommodations in downtown Jackson with particular attention to an adjacent or nearby headquarters hotel to the convention center - required to be fully successful as a destination convention city.
5. Visit Jackson Board of Directors succession plan review—identifying and attaining key community and visitor industry decision-makers.
6. The Jackson Board and staff renewed accountability: agreed-upon destination/DLO metrics and measurements.

4.0 DESTINATION STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Visit Jackson Mission/Purpose, Values, Promises and Visions

Influenced by findings of the planning process and input from the Steering Committee, refinements were made to the Visit Jackson mission and vision statements, and a new destination vision statement was developed. A range of principles and values that will help guide implementation of the plan initiatives were also refined.

Mission Statement
The following mission statement is similar to the organization's previous one but takes a more external perspective, recognizing the importance of connecting and engaging visitors.

The mission of Visit Jackson is to engage and inspire residents, community stakeholders, and visitors by promoting Jackson as a welcoming and vibrant destination for conventions, meetings, sporting events, special events, and leisure and business travel. Through strategic destination marketing and community engagement, Visit Jackson seeks to create rich and memorable cultural experiences, foster a strong sense of place, and enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity of our community.

Organization Purpose Statement
Previously, Visit Jackson had a "Goal" statement which is recast as a "Purpose" with some minor wording variances.

The overall purpose of Visit Jackson is to render major economic impact for the city and area through programs designed to identify, attract and service conventions and meetings, trade shows, group tours, sporting events and leisure travelers while nurturing relationships with stakeholders, the value of citizen contributions, and the collective quality of place and community lifestyles.

Organization Values and Promises
Visit Jackson has a set of Organizational Values which are:

Values

Integrity	We are fair, honest and transparent, inspiring trust in others.
Collaboration	We respect, nurture, support and empower one another.
Passion	We uphold the spirit of our community; the goal of our organization, and we are committed to making our jobs and the jobs of our co-workers fun on a consistent basis.
Respect	We respect and understand the importance of our bureau's mission, take pride in being an integral part of its success, and are committed to aggressively upholding the principles of diversity, inclusion, and hospitality.

One additional value is recommended, recognizing the increasingly important role that accountability for successful performance will play.

Accountability - We know that our efforts need to be measured according to agreed-to destination and DLO metrics and that our community benefits from what we do.

There is also an existing Brand Promise and a Diversity and Inclusion Statement with its Brand Promise centered

Brand Promise

Jackson is all about an authentic soul, which isn't wrapped up in the number of hotel rooms or events or attractions in the city. The soul of Jackson is uniquely tied to our people. Our people exude creativity and hospitality, forging memorable experiences every time you visit the City With Soul.

Diversity and Inclusion

Visit Jackson is fiercely committed to reflecting and upholding the value of diversity of thought, culture, and lifestyles that is inherent in the Jackson community. We are dedicated to practicing radical inclusion and believe that a plurality of ideas and experiences shaped around civil dialogue and equitable outreach is the driving and consistent force that makes Jackson a great destination and a great city.

around a theme of "Rooted in Culture. Inspired by Community."

In addition to the Brand Promise, three additional DLO Promises should be considered.

DLO Promises

Visitor – To champion Jackson's unique brand experiences.

Stakeholder/Partner – To facilitate business opportunities through increased visitor exposure, advocacy and education.

Community – To deliver resident benefits through tourism.

Organization 2035 Vision Statement
The current Visit Jackson vision statement is refined to reflect its broader role as a Destination Leadership Organization, with roles in proactive tourism product development.

To be the catalyst for Jackson's transformation into one of America's most vibrant and welcoming destination cities, recognized for its culture, creativity, hospitality, and sustainable economic growth through collaborative leadership and innovative destination stewardship.

DESTINATION 2035 VISION STATEMENT

While Visit Jackson has had a vision statement, there was not one oriented to the overall destination. This destination vision statement is aspirational in nature and achievable in 10 years.

Destination 2035 Vision Statement
Jackson MS is recognized as a welcoming, diverse and multi-day destination, with nationally recognized cultural and civil rights attractions and events within a safe and secure environment.

4.2 Visit Jackson Pillar Goals and Objectives, Strategies and Tactics

To address key challenges and fulfill the previously noted Vision and Mission statements, five Goal Pillars were developed and are utilized in the preparation of a blend of objectives, strategies, and tactics.



4.2.1 Refine Targeting to Attract High Value Visitor Segments

Previous marketing efforts have successfully attracted visitors to Jackson. New efforts should build on these past successes and utilize new resources to further refine targets, motivate them to stay longer and further stimulate Jackson residents to invite friends and relatives.

Objective 1: Use geo-location data and relevant visitor survey results to refine and target high-value segments.

Strategy 1: Incorporate lead database findings to help craft messaging to enhance conversion, extend length of stay and address negative factors influencing visitor decisions.

Tactic 1: Utilize the new Visitor Profile Survey, considering both liked and disliked factors, incorporating messaging in future outreach efforts.
Tactic 2: Craft messaging oriented to repeat visitors providing them with reasons why they need to return and undertake new experiences in Jackson.
Tactic 3: Identify Jackson experiences and neighborhoods frequently combined by visitors and show how they are easily integrated stimulating longer stays.

Strategy 2: Utilize geo-location and other research to understand visitor origin, recent behavioral changes and prioritize new marketing initiatives.

Tactic 1: Track on an ongoing basis changing trends in geo-locations of visitors and impacts to lodging demand and length of stay.
Tactic 2: Refine geographic marketing priorities to those areas maximizing multi-day, higher spending segments.
Tactic 3: Utilize both Symphony and Zartico geo-databases to evaluate consistency in findings and evolving trends.

Objective 2: Launch campaign targeted to day visitors with focus on why Jackson is a "must do" multi-day experience.

Strategy 1: Use first person testimonials to communicate multi-day experiences.

Tactic 1: Use actual visitors in their first-person voices noting how much they didn't see on their day trip and why they needed a multi-day experience to truly experience Jackson.

Strategy 2: Develop a range of multi-day itineraries around synergistic segmented themes.

Tactic 1: Showcase examples of why Jackson is a multi-day experience, integrating themes like culinary, outdoor recreation and cultural experiences.
Tactic 2: Reinforce identity of Jackson providing a diversity of experiences, better ensuring prospective visitors do not see Jackson as a "one and done" destination.

Objective 3: Undertake new internal resident campaign that stimulates Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) interest, while enhancing pride in own backyard.

Strategy 1: Launch internal resident communications campaign that shows residents introducing Friends and Relatives to Jackson experiences.

Tactic 1: Develop internal campaign that stimulates residents to provide examples of them hosting friends and family, along with activities they experienced.
Tactic 2: Provide prizes, such as hotel stays, museum tickets, dining promotions, etc. for innovative examples, allowing residents to be a visitor in their own back yard.

Strategy 2: Develop "Invite Friends & Relatives" challenge with prizes to residents using innovative approaches.

Tactic 1: Develop follow-on program that challenges residents to help Jackson's economy by inviting their friends and relatives.
Tactic 2: Craft a mix of downloadable messages and images that residents can use as they connect and invite prospective visitors.

Objective 4: Craft initiatives to reconnect with prospects that have not traveled to Jackson and develop messaging that stimulates multi-day travel interest.

Strategy 1: Utilize lead database and prioritize reconnections based on geographic area, time of lead and travel behavior.

Tactic 1: Refine and grade lead database prospects, considering when lead was developed, source of lead and any associated background that may be present.
Tactic 2: Develop ongoing outreach campaign that reconnects with these prospects based on the previously noted refinements, ensuring the connection is maximized, while limiting over-exposure.

Strategy 2: Craft incentives for leads to opt-in to ongoing reconnections to keep abreast of Jackson offerings.

Tactic 1: Provide incentives, such as gift cards, free dining opportunities, etc. for prospects to opt-in to updates on Jackson experiences.

4.2.2 Enhance Product Offerings for Reinforced Destination Appeal

The second pillar recognizes it's not enough to just market and promote the destination, but to also proactively enhance the products and experiences in the destination to maximize guest experiences. This is especially the case with destinations like Jackson that have high repeat visitation with many of them asking "what's new."

Objective 1: Act on Destination Master Plan lodging recommendations by targeting a range of size and caliber properties.

Strategy 1: Craft presentation that identifies the lodging opportunities in Jackson and potential development sites (convention center, limited service and specialty properties).



Tactic 1: Analyze lodging performance by age and caliber of properties to demonstrate variances in occupancy and ADR achievements.
Tactic 2: Assemble GMs from newer, quality properties developing examples of successful initiatives and how Jackson has been a good partner in their operations.
Tactic 3: Identify potential sites that could be considered for future hotel development and their associated attributes.
Tactic 4: Develop presentation that integrates these elements and builds a case for why development in the City of Jackson rather than outlying areas makes sense.

Strategy 2: Proactively reach out to regional hotel developers showcasing reasons they should invest in Jackson.

Tactic 1: Identify range of active hotel developers in region and the hotel flags they typically represent.
Tactic 2: Develop outreach plan to meet with them and present why they should consider opportunities in the City of Jackson – integrate both lodging detail and initiatives planned by Visit Jackson.

Strategy 3: Develop a plan to transition non-competitive lodging inventory to other uses.

Tactic 1: Identify the location and range of older, non-competitive properties in the City of Jackson and their impacts on negatively influencing the identify of Jackson as one of the South's premier cultural and heritage destinations.
Tactic 2: Work with the City in developing new ordinances and incentives to transition properties whether complete redevelopment or reuse for other purposes such as small offices, moderate housing, artisan uses, etc.

Objective 2: Form a citywide cultural tourism working group to collectively integrate and promote the range of museums and cultural institutions.

Strategy 1: Develop an ongoing working group that identifies new ways to present the many cultural assets as an integrated experience.

Tactic 1: Develop a summary presentation of the role of an ongoing working group, the opportunity to raise the collective power of this segment and how lessons like the LeFleur Museum District could be implemented City-wide.
Tactic 2: Identify cultural leaders that could help integrate the mix of cultural and heritage attractions and serve as a collective voice for the group.
Tactic 3: Develop integrated marketing, ticketing and promotional initiatives that help visitors understand the collective range of Jackson experiences.

Strategy 2: Increasingly showcase this positioning theme as Jackson's true competitive advantage.

Tactic 1: Elevate the identify of Jackson of one of the south's premiere cultural and heritage destinations.
Tactic 2: Develop sub-brands and marketing themes that reinforce culture and heritage as a truly distinct experience only Jackson can provide.

Objective 3: Increasingly showcase the range of outdoor recreation assets and how they can be activated.

Strategy 1: Similar to the cultural theme, bring the outdoor recreation entities together to link and integrate the range of offerings.

Tactic 1: Bring State Parks, regional trail representatives, and outdoor recreation business representatives together, identifying how Jackson experiences can be integrated and "served up" to visitors in the most effective ways.
Tactic 2: Identify prospective outfitters that could assist visitors in their outdoor experiences, (water, biking, hiking, etc.) and how they could link and integrate with visitors.

Strategy 2: Showcase how outdoor recreation is a natural combination for arts/culture and culinary tourism experiences.

Tactic 1: Develop messaging that Jackson links outdoor experiences with Jackson's unique culinary and cultural experiences, making it easy for prospects to understand the integration.

Objective 4: Craft new wayfinding approaches that facilitate a visitor's understanding of how to access products dispersed throughout the city.

Strategy 1: Develop and incorporate simplified maps online, in print materials and as stand-alone collateral.

Tactic 1: Develop an easy-to-read map that identifies the main visitor-oriented nodes and neighborhoods in the City of Jackson and how they can be most easily accessed.
Tactic 2: Position the map on the Visit Jackson website, in its travel guide, and as a stand-alone printed version.

Strategy 2: Expand wayfinding elements with common themes, helping visitors navigate while in the community.

Tactic 1: Work with City to develop a mix of integrated wayfinding signage that corresponds to other collateral materials and helps visitors navigate to key visitor nodes in the city.
Tactic 2: Provide guidance for what to look for in wayfinding signage in a range of visitor connection elements (printed materials, apps, website, etc.)



4.2.3 Strengthen Organization to Ensure Effectiveness and Ongoing Vitality

The third pillar focuses on the Visit Jackson organization itself, outlining a range of strategies and tactics to maximize the effectiveness in future years.

Objective 1: Approve and execute a multi-year priority-based DLO strategic plan.

Strategy 1: Agree on time-phased priority initiatives through the specified Visit Jackson governance process.

Tactic 1: With potential changes from the Strategic Planning steering committee and staff, and a recommendation to proceed, the Board of Directors to approve the Five-year Strategic Plan, including timed priority initiatives for operational consideration.

Strategy 2: Use strategic plan summary as a five-year guiding tool.

Tactic 1: With an approved strategic plan summary, the Board of Directors to review progress of the Visit Jackson Strategic Plan activities twice a year as part of regular Board meetings.
Tactic 2: Using the same plan summary, the Visit Jackson senior leadership team to activate agreed-to priority initiatives with measurable results over the five-year period.

Strategy 3: Align the strategic plan to the current, but modified, annual destination marketing & operational plan.

Tactic 1: The current annual Operational Plan to be redrafted by the Visit Jackson senior leadership team according to destination marketing/sales/services, destination development, DLO advocacy/community relations and DLO resource goal pillars and by market/audience/project segmentation.
Tactic 2: The Visit Jackson team to insert and activate strategic plan priority initiatives in their respective annual Destination Marketing & Operational Plans.

Strategy 4: Form new and/or enhanced strategic destination partnerships to help implement the strategic plan.

Tactic 1: Renew the Visit Jackson Partnership program and examine strengthened partnerships with the Jackson-Evers International Airport, Capitol Area Transportation Agency, educational institutions, sports event sector bodies, and the activation of green initiatives.

Objective 2: Undertake a revised DLO chart and increase internal collaboration.

Strategy 1: Prepare an updated DLO chart given strategic priorities and management realignment.

Tactic 1: Review the recent Fired Up! Human Resources and NTG/DCG Human and Financial Resources Strategy report in acknowledging a revised DLO chart with focus on destination marketing/communications, development and resources management.

Strategy 2: Evaluate and compile new/revised designated job descriptions.

Tactic 1: Prepare, in conjunction with respective Visit Jackson staff, new/updated job positions based on key roles, responsibilities/duties, technical requirements and relevant measurables.

Strategy 3: Review and schedule effective DLO governance and departmental, senior management, and full staff meetings.

Tactic 1: Continue the Visit Jackson Board of directors' meetings six times per year with Executive Committee sessions scheduled between these regular Board meetings.
Tactic 2: To encourage consistent and complete understanding of Visit Jackson activities, full staff meetings to occur monthly and senior leadership meetings weekly, both lasting one hour.

Objective 3: Refine the new DLO funding/financial strategy commencing in FY2026/2027.

Strategy 1: Finalize the Visit Jackson increased funding rationale report with proposed new tourism marketing/sales and other investment programs.

Tactic 1: Approval of the formalized funding investment rationale/summary reports for influential use with stakeholders (foodservice and hotel owners and operators) and residents.

Strategy 2: Socialize with, gain support and receive approval for a combined new destination funding formula based on increased restaurant and lodging tax levies from the affected hospitality industry stakeholders.

Tactic 1: Full engagement of a proactive resident campaign at both the city and neighborhood levels, including a prepared presentation.

Strategy 3: Develop a contingency plan if anticipated funding does not materialize.

Tactic 1: Prepare a 2026-2027 Visit Jackson Plan B with a related budget.

Objective 4: Reset the current DLO charitable foundation to gain a potential new funding advantage

Strategy 1: Reactivate the 501(c)(3) charitable foundation

Tactic 1: Legal counsel to review and administratively prepare the 501(c)(3) charitable foundation to receive supplementary tourism grants and related funding from individual donors, not-for-profits and/or governments.

Strategy 2: Obtain DLO Board of Directors consent and assign a senior Visit Jackson staff member to proactively seek new funds.

Tactic 1: Attain Board approval and appoint a Visit Jackson staff member for this responsibility.

Objective 5: Diversify the composition of the DLO Board of Directors to ensure strong participation, community engagement and influence.

Strategy 1: Supplement the Board with new appointees from the Strategic Planning steering committee who have active interest and key community decision-making influence.

Tactic 1: Approach selective Strategic Planning steering committee members and seek their agreement on becoming a permanent Visit Jackson Board member, contingent on forthcoming appointment approval from the city.

Strategy 2: Activate a more formalized Board member orientation program along with new commitments and committee responsibilities.

Tactic 1: Preparation of a revised half-day Board orientation program, including lunch and final takeaways.
Tactic 2: Delivery of new updated Board orientation program to all new and current Board members and repeated twice annually with new information.

4.2.4 Expand Stakeholder and Resident Engagement on Tourism's Community Role and Value

This fourth pillar builds on the already strong strides Visit Jackson has made in connecting and engaging with Jackson residents. It recognizes the importance of understanding their perspectives and desires related to the visitor industry to better ensure strong support of the industry.

Objective 1: Activate a formalized advocacy and community relations plan.

Strategy 1: Prepare a multi-year audience-based stakeholder relations plan.

Tactic 1: A two-year internal communications plan that identifies key priority issues and audiences, along with related messaging, based on recent resident survey results.

Strategy 2: Execute the annual stakeholder plan's influential activities by the Visit Jackson President, associated communications staff members, selected Board members and others, where needed.

Tactic 1: Implement the pertinent activities—such as consistently used Speakers Bureau, visitors center open house, National Tourism & Travel Week festivities, local FAM tours, complimentary resident attraction days, My City program review, and hospitality training reactivation—with assigned responsibilities.

Objective 2: Revise the Annual Report into a Community Report on Tourism, identifying results and new strategic directions.

Strategy 1: Evaluate and redesign the current Annual Report to determine tourism successes and long-term priorities,

Tactic 1: Convert the Visit Jackson Annual Report to a Community Tourism report by incorporating strategic plan priorities, destination/DLO 2026 successes and profiling community tourism leaders and their legacies.

Strategy 2: Use the tourism piece fully in all advocacy efforts.

Tactic 1: With a proactive local outreach program, the online and printed Community Report on Tourism to be available to industry stakeholders, residents and government officials.

Objective 3: Form a permanent Jackson Tourism Council to fully represent the city and visitor industry sector to receive complete advice and provide enhanced tourism advocacy.

Strategy 1 - Select a small group of high-profile tourism proponents with outstanding reputations and influential community connections based on the preparation of a Tourism Council purpose and activity statement.

Tactic 1: Identify up to five key tourism leaders from the government, corporate and not-for-profit sectors to sit on the Tourism Council.

Strategy 2: The Tourism Council to be aligned to the Visit Jackson Board of Directors with increased support effort on selected tourism issues/projects of importance to the city.

Tactic 1: The proposed Tourism Council to be convened on an ad hoc basis by the Visit Jackson Board Chairperson and CEO when considerable influential support is needed on high impact tourism issues.

Objective 4: Establish a local tourism/hospitality association to provide 'common purpose' strength and focus on key advocacy issues in conjunction with Visit Jackson.

Strategy 1: Determine a small core of committed foodservice/restaurant and lodging/hotel owners and/or operators with support from Visit Jackson to start and co-lead a key hospitality entity.

Tactic 1: Identify up to seven key restaurateurs and hoteliers to serve as guiding members of the Jackson Tourism and Hospitality Association based on a prepared purpose and activity statement for the Association.

Strategy 2: Outline Visit Jackson's support during the initial formation of the Hospitality Association.

Tactic 1: Visit Jackson to clearly declare support for all set up financial costs, ongoing meeting venue and partnership promotional and communications programming.

4.2.5 Thrive Through Dedicated Research and Agreed-To Destination/DLO Metrics and Measures

This final pillar focuses on ensuring a set of metrics and measures are incorporated into the tracking and evaluating progress in plan implementation. Through a set of agreed on metrics and the associated research required to measure, Visit Jackson and its Board of Directors will be better able to move the organization forward.

Objective 1: Review and approve destination/DLO metrics and measurements.

Strategy 1 : Agree on recognized best destination and DLO metrics.

Tactic 1: The best 12 visitor market- and resident audience-based metrics to be customized by Visit Jackson staff and Board approved.
Tactic 2: Suggested new destination development metrics assessed and customized by Visit Jackson staff and Board approved.

Strategy 2: Approve aligned quantitative/qualitative measurements against agreed-to metrics to demonstrate destination and Visit Jackson successes.

Tactic 1: All specific quantitative/qualitative measurements related to the destination/DLO metrics projected to 2031 to be evaluated by Visit Jackson staff and Board approved.

Objective 2: Continue using a customized performance scorecard.

Strategy 1: Enhance the current Tourism Economics' Symphony Platform by adding supplemental community and tourism sector statistics based on the destination and Visit Jackson's needs.

Tactic 1: Provide the above Symphony Platform with new destination/DLO measures derived from Objective 1 analyses

Strategy 2: Promote and distribute the above Symphony performance scorecard with relevant information to Visit Jackson partners and the media.

Tactic 1: Regularly provide Visit Jackson partners and the media with the interpreted Symphony performance scorecard results, along with the newly formatted and content improved annual Jackson MS Community Report on Tourism.

Objective 3: Ensure an integrated DLO contact database covering consumer, group and stakeholder/resident audiences.

Strategy 1: Examine the pros and cons of available database software that will allow full integration of contact information with Visit Jackson website as prime conduit.

Tactic 1: Visit Jackson staff to investigate the best practical integrated DLO database systems.

Strategy 2: Choose the best approach and design capability as evaluated by Visit Jackson staff.

Tactic 1: Given all the pros and cons analyses and relevant decision criteria, the Visit Jackson staff to recommend the best database software to purchase to meet needs, along with future staffing responsibilities.

Objective 4: Coordinate and fully understand current research project outcomes and institute a long-term research program tied to the information needs of strategic and operational plans.

Strategy 1: Compile a comprehensive multi-year research program for Visit Jackson.

Tactic 1: Based on required information needs, Visit Jackson to prepare a destination/DLO-wide five-year research program outline identifying projects with proponent lead and costs.

Strategy 2: Execute required research projects that yield applied results for Visit Jackson programming.

Tactic 1: Visit Jackson to initiate and complete where resources are available, specific research projects as identified annually through their incorporation into the Destination Marketing and Operational Plans, and to use forthcoming results for better decision-making.


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4.3 Plan Timetable, Responsibilities and Metrics

Timing related to each of the Pillars and their associated Objectives are noted below. Short-term timing suggests action within the first 12-18 months of the plan. Mid-term suggests action in years 2 and 3 of the plan, and long-term suggests actions in years 4 and 5 of the plan.

Visit Jackson will take the lead role in all of these Objectives. Prospective partners that could also play a support role are also noted in the chart.

In evaluating progress associated with each of the Pillars, a mix of suggested measures and metrics are recommended.

Refine	ST	MT	LT
TARGETING TO ATTRACT HIGH VALUE VISITOR SEGMENTS			
Use geo-location data and relevant visitor survey results to refine high-value segments Support Partners: None	X		
Launch campaign targeted to day visitors Support Partners: None	X		
Undertake new internal resident campaign Support Partners: City of Jackson staff			X
Craft initiatives to reconnect with prospects that have not yet traveled Support Partners: None		X	
Enhance			
PRODUCT OFFERINGS FOR REINFORCED DESTINATION APPEAL			
Act on Destination Master Plan lodging recommendations Support Partners: Lodging GMs, City of Jackson staff, Economic Development	X		
Form a citywide cultural tourism working group Support Partners: Cultural Institution Leadership	X		
Increasingly showcase the range of outdoor recreation assets Support Partners: State Parks, Trail Representatives, Outdoor Rec Entrepreneurs			X
Craft new wayfinding approaches that facilitate a visitor's understanding of how to access Support Partners: City of Jackson staff		X	

	ST	MT	LT
Strengthen **ORGANIZATION TO ENSURE EFFECTIVENESS AND ONGOING VITALITY**			
Approve and execute a multi-year priority-based DLO strategic plan Support Partners: None	X		
Undertake a revised DLO chart and increase internal collaboration Support Partners: None	X		
Refine the new CLO funding/financial strategy commencing in FY2026/2027 Support Partners: City of Jackson staff	X		
Reactivate tourism-related charitable foundation Support Partners: None	X		
Supplement DLO Board of Directors with new appointees along with a strong on-boarding program Support Partners: City of Jackson staff	X		
Expand **STAKEHOLDER AND RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT ON TOURISM'S ROLE AND VALUE**			
Activate a formalized advocacy and community relations plan Support Partners: City of Jackson staff	X		
Revise the Annual Report into a Community Report Support Partners: None	X		
Form a permanent Jackson Tourism Council Support Partners: None		X	
Set up a local tourism/hospitality association Support Partners: Hotel, F&B, Retail, Attraction Leaders	X		
Thrive **THROUGH DEDICATED RESEARCH AND AGREED-TO DESTINATION/DLO METRICS**			
Review and approve destination/DLO metrics and measurements Support Partners: None	X		
Continue using a customized performance scorecard Support Partners: None	X		
Ensure an integrated DLO contact database Support Partners: None		X	
Coordinate current research project outcomes and institute a long-term research program Support Partners: None	X		

In evaluating progress associated with each of the Pillars, a mix of suggested measures and metrics are recommended.

Refine

TARGETING TO ATTRACT HIGH VALUE VISITOR SEGMENTS

Utilize geo-location data in evaluating
Changes in % overnight versus daytrippers
Changes in average length of stay
Increased penetration of target geographic areas

Utilize STR data in evaluating
Changes in average occupancy levels
Changes in average daily rates

Conduct semi-annual visitor profile surveys to evaluate
Changes to satisfaction levels
Changes in repeat visitation levels

Enhance

PRODUCT OFFERINGS FOR REINFORCED DESTINATION APPEAL

Track level of new lodging development - planned and actual
Track number of old properties being transitioned to different uses
Identify activities of Cultural Working Tourism Group
Identify activities of Outdoor Recreation Working Tourism Group

Conduct semi-annual visitor profile surveys to evaluate
Changes in visitation to cultural/heritage attractions
Changes in visitation to outdoor recreation attractions

Strengthen

ORGANIZATION TO ENSURE EFFECTIVENESS AND ONGOING VITALITY

Track progress in achieving incremental tax funding
Evaluate changes in staffing and organizational structural changes

Expand

STAKEHOLDER AND RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT ON TOURISM'S ROLE AND VALUE

Evaluate progress in development of Tourism Council and Hospitality Association

Conduct semi-annual resident survey to evaluate

Resident perceptions to visitor industry

Recognition of the industry's role in their resident's Quality of Life

Thrive

THROUGH DEDICATED RESEARCH AND AGREED-TO DESTINATION/DLO METRICS

Evaluate levels of ongoing tracking and alignment with Strategic Plan

Demonstrate of how research tools are being utilized for decision making

Evaluate how Lead Database is being maximized





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