

***DUVAL COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA***

Wednesday, October 8, 2025, 2:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

City Hall – 2nd Floor Conference Room

TDC Subcommittee Members: City Council President Kevin Carrico (Chair), Michael Jenkins, Dennis Thompson

TDC Staff: Carol Brock (Executive Director), Brett Nolan (Administrator), Phillip Peterson (Auditor), Daren Anderson (Office of General Counsel)

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| I. Welcome and Call to Order | Chair Carrico |
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II. Public Comments Including Action Items |
Chair Carrico |
| III. Framework for Tourism Strategic Plan | Subcommittee |
| A. What is a Tourism Strategic Plan? | |
| B. Why does TDC need a Tourism Strategic Plan? | |
| C. How is it developed and implemented? | |
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IV. Review Recommendations by Downs & St. Germain |
Subcommittee |
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V. Next Steps* |
Subcommittee |
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VI. Closing Comments and Adjournment |
Chair Carrico |

**** Denotes motion may be needed.***

WHERE SHOULD THE TDC INVEST FOR GREATEST IMPACT?

Guiding Question:

Which types of investments by Visit Jacksonville and the Tourism Development Council (TDC) will have the greatest impact on growing tourism in Jacksonville?

This section synthesizes the stakeholder and community engagement, and visitor perception analysis to directly answer that question. The resulting recommendations reflect priorities that are both visionary and practical, designed to deliver clear value for visitors, stakeholders, and the Jacksonville tourism economy.

Each investment category was selected based on:

- Strong validation from stakeholders and visitor research
- Alignment with Jacksonville's unique opportunities and gaps
- Feasibility within the statutory and operational roles of Visit Jax and the TDC
- Potential to create immediate and long-term improvements to the visitor experience

1. Destination Marketing & Messaging

Visit Jacksonville's strongest core function, marketing, remains its most powerful tool for shaping perceptions and inspiring visitation. Stakeholders overwhelmingly affirmed that continued and expanded marketing efforts should be a central investment priority. At the same time, research revealed that non-visitors lack clarity on what Jacksonville offers, and many are unaware of its diverse neighborhoods and cultural identity.

Recommended Investments:

- Expand storytelling beyond sports and beaches to actively promote neighborhood identity, culture, and personality.
- Deploy pre-arrival discovery tools such as interactive itineraries or trip matchers.

2. Event Development & Support

Events were consistently cited by stakeholders and visitors as a powerful motivator for travel and a key opportunity to improve the city's tourism appeal. Survey data also revealed strong interest in an updated event grant model, one that values not only economic impact but community enrichment and geographic inclusivity.

Recommended Investments:

- Introduce a tiered event grant structure that rewards cultural value, local partnerships, and dispersal.
- Invest in new signature events that reflect Jacksonville's identity and create regional draw.
- Support underrepresented neighborhoods and event producers through targeted programming.
- Expand post-event tracking to measure attendee movement and area visitation.

3. Tourism Infrastructure & Capital Investment

Improving baseline visitor infrastructure emerged as one of the most widely supported opportunities among stakeholders. Gaps in downtown walkability, riverfront access, restrooms, and lighting were all cited as deterrents. Additionally, there is no formalized capital grant program, despite strong interest among stakeholders to see one implemented.

Recommended Investments:

- Fund low-cost, high-impact improvements such as signage, lighting, sidewalk continuity, and comfort amenities.
- Create a **formal Capital Improvement Grant Program** to support mid- to large-scale projects.
- Launch a **Micro-Capital Grant Program** for quick-response neighborhood tourism improvements.

4. Meetings, Conventions & Group Tourism

Jacksonville has the opportunity to grow its group and meetings sector without solely relying on expanded convention infrastructure. Stakeholders emphasized that showcasing non-traditional, community-based venues could simultaneously disperse visitors, reduce pressure on core facilities, and enhance the overall attendee experience.

Recommended Investments:

- Create a centralized partner portal for all unique and non-traditional meeting venues.
- Encourage meetings to pair their sessions with events or receptions at offsite locations (e.g., arts districts, museums).
- Update event evaluation and grant scoring to reward creativity in venue use and neighborhood activation.

WHERE SHOULD THE TDC INVEST FOR GREATEST IMPACT?

5. Neighborhood & Local Business Engagement

Stakeholders, particularly hoteliers, repeatedly expressed a desire to be more connected to tourism promotion. Many cited tools and guides they'd like to use for guests, some of which already exist but are underutilized. This points not to a resource gap, but to a communication and engagement opportunity.

Recommended Investments:

- Package existing tools (visitor guides, event calendars) into clear, user-friendly formats by audience type (families, couples, solo).
- Continue the Tourism Ambassador Program.
- Provide promotional kits for front-line staff and concierge teams across hotels.
- Explore a formalized partnership model with defined benefits and engagement tiers.

6. Visitor Experience Enhancements

Both resident sentiment and visitor data pointed to several areas where the on-the-ground experience in Jacksonville could be improved. Downtown perception remains a challenge, and stakeholders underscored that green space alone isn't enough to activate the riverfront. Targeted investments in activities, access, and amenities can make these areas feel welcoming and dynamic.

Recommended Investments:

- Partner with other entities to activate the riverfront with accessible attractions, water-based tours, or even river cruises (pending feasibility).
- Improve wayfinding and path continuity between the riverfront and key venues.
- Promote experiences that create a strong **sense of place** and **visitor movement** beyond hotel corridors.

Conclusion

These six investment categories form the backbone of a comprehensive, actionable tourism strategy for Jacksonville. They reflect a blend of strategic vision, community voice, visitor expectation, and practical feasibility. More than isolated tactics, these investments reinforce one another, each elevating Jacksonville's ability to attract, engage, and satisfy a diverse range of travelers.

“It [Jacksonville] is a fabulously complicated place. It is geospatially sprawling, demographically, racially, culturally, socioeconomically, any other way you want to slice and dice it, it is a complicated place. Yeah, it's a universe of neighborhoods, but I think the closest that we can come to articulating some identity is just that it is really a complicated diverse sprawling place. I think it's endlessly interesting.”

- Stakeholder

QUICK WINS & IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

These are practical, visible, and low-barrier actions the TDC and Visit Jacksonville can take in the next 12 months to begin activating this strategic plan.

Destination Marketing & Messaging	Event Development & Support	Tourism Infrastructure & Capital Investment	Meetings, Convention, & Group Tourism	Neighborhood & Local Business Engagement	Visitor Experience Enhancements
● Launch targeted campaigns emphasizing Jacksonville's unique neighborhoods ● Create downloadable trip types or themed itineraries on the website (e.g., "Family Fun in Riverside" or "Art Lovers in San Marco") ● Begin design of "Which Jax Are You?" interactive tool or simplified version ● Integrate storytelling into existing email and social content calendar	● Update scoring criteria for event grants to prioritize cultural impact and dispersal ● Host an information session to attract new event partners and walk them through application updates ● Develop an "event grant success story" highlight campaign ● Identify underrepresented neighborhoods to target with future grant opportunities	● Begin a pilot Capital Improvement Grant round with small, visible projects (bathrooms, lighting, signage) ● Partner with the City to identify tourism-priority infrastructure upgrades in downtown ● Add wayfinding signage or event-specific banners in key pedestrian corridors (especially riverfront)	● Inventory available unique venues and load into a shared partner portal ● Update group sales materials with neighborhood-venue highlights ● Test 1–2 meetings using a neighborhood venue + offsite reception format	● Package and distribute 1-sheet visitor guides segmented by visitor type (families, couples, business) ● Conduct a partner training blitz on tools available via Visit Jax's site and app ● Expand the Tourism Ambassador Program with a focus on hotel front desks and key attractions	● Map lighting and walkability gaps downtown and along the riverfront ● Provide portable or upgraded public restrooms at event-heavy locations ● Coordinate riverfront activation during signature events using placemaking elements (temporary installations, games, food carts)

INVESTMENT TIMELINE

Investment Area	Short-Term (0–12 months)	Mid-Term (1–3 years)	Long-Term (3–5 years)
Destination Marketing & Messaging	- Launch updated storytelling tools - Begin neighborhood campaign content - Deploy trip itineraries	- Expand influencer and digital reach - Introduce trip-matcher personalization tools	Deepen segmentation by audience type and travel behavior
Event Development & Support	- Revise grant scoring criteria - Host outreach sessions for producers	- Pilot new event formats tied to brand/identity - Track post-event impact	- Scale grant funding - Develop new signature events tied to seasonality
Tourism Infrastructure & Capital	- Launch micro-grant pilot - Identify shovel-ready projects (e.g., lighting, restrooms)	- Establish formal capital grant process - Co-invest in walkability or riverfront upgrades	Support large-scale tourism infrastructure through phased partnerships
Meetings, Conventions & Group Tourism	- Inventory and publish unique venue portal - Update meeting planner tools	- Incentivize venue dispersal in event grants - Package “Meet in the Neighborhood” itineraries	Support hotel/venue feasibility studies in underserved areas
Neighborhood & Business Engagement	- Relaunch visitor-facing toolkits - Distribute 1-sheets by traveler type	- Expand Tourism Ambassador outreach - Formalize partner tiers/programs	Build stronger B2B digital partner ecosystem (CRM or communications platform)
Visitor Experience Enhancements	- Audit downtown lighting, wayfinding, and restrooms - Activate short-term amenities at riverfront events	- Coordinate inter-agency upgrades - Deploy small-scale improvements	Advocate for longer-term wayfinding and pedestrian infrastructure investments

A Strategic Plan for the TDC (DRAFT)

What?	What is a Strategic Plan? A simple and concise definition of what the TDC desires to fund to attract tourists to Jacksonville, Florida. It is a guideline of spending that is ever-changing. Funding decisions can deviate from the strategic plan.
Why?	Why does the TDC need a Strategic Plan? To make funding decisions that are guided by a plan, rather than impromptu requests.
How?	How is it developed? Through research, stakeholder, and community feedback. How is it implemented? Into the Visit Jacksonville annual marketing plan and budget. Into the scoring process of grant applications. Regular communication of the plan during TDC board meetings.

Areas of Focus / Key Categories (DRAFT)

SPORTS

Expansion of sports venues, teams, and major events.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Marketing of existing assets, such as downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods (Destination Marketing & Messaging).

ATTRACTIONS

Capital investment into more brick and mortar attractions with daily programming.

GROUP TOURISM

Develop a new approach to group tourism focused on leveraging non-traditional meeting venues placed near attractions or coinciding with events.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Enhancing the infrastructure surrounding venues, attractions, and events to enhance the visitor experience.