As the Executive Director of the Walton County Tourist Development Council (TDC), my ultimate goal is to preserve and enhance the South Walton brand, and by doing so safeguard Walton County’s economy and quality of life.

Under the Visit South Walton brand name, we employ a multi-pronged marketing strategy to encourage year-round visitation, but our responsibilities extend far beyond marketing. In order to protect and enhance the South Walton experience for both visitors and residents we maintain more than 20 miles of our beaches as well as 52 public beach accesses and 20 miles of multi-use path. The tourism tax we collect supports the community, funding programs like the South Walton Fire District lifeguards and supporting dozens of popular events that help bring not just entertainment, but also economic prosperity to Walton County.

Tourism is far and away Walton County’s primary economic driver, creating a $4.4 billion dollar economic impact last year. Visitors fund 100 percent of TDC activities, and pay the majority of the taxes that support Walton County’s government, schools and infrastructure.

Additionally, visitors also account for 73 percent of all retail spending in Walton County.

Tourism creates jobs in Walton County – 22,000 jobs, in fact – and also makes it possible for many of our favorite businesses to prosper, increasing the quality of life for all residents. Tourism funds are being used to purchase beachfront parcels for new public beach accesses and increase parking options in South Walton. Those amenities will enhance the quality of life for residents, and safeguard the visitor experience for generations to come.

The Walton County TDC has a great team in place, a great destination to promote, and a bright future. We are dedicated to protecting Walton County’s economy, aesthetic and culture, and look forward to another successful year working with local partners toward that shared goal.

JAY TUSA
Executive Director
Walton County Tourist Development Council
The Value of SOUTH WALTON VISITORS

22,000
Walton County jobs created by tourism

2017 VISITORS DIRECT SPENDING

TOTAL ACCOMMODATIONS $1,263,250,400
ATTENDANCE $628,200,000
ENTERTAINMENT $269,000,000
SHOPPING $377,600,000
RESTAURANTS $218,400,000
IN-Room $173,600,000
ON-Parcel $41,600,000
TIPS $889,000,000

VISITORS SPEND $489 EVERY DAY OF THEIR TRIP

4,010,500 VISITORS SPEND $2.98 BILLION

$4.4 BILLION TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

45% BAG: OPERATIONS
43% MARKETING
4% ADM: ADMINISTRATION
3% SALES: INSUMER RELATIONSHIPS

The Tourist Development Tax is paid only by visitors staying in short-term rentals, such as hotels, condos and beach houses.

While the State of Florida has strict rules governing how those funds can be spent, many of the activities and amenities they support – such as bike trails, public beach accesses, lifeguards, and special events – enhance the lives of residents as well as visitors.

New Regional Beach Access Locations and Expected Opening Dates

• Miramar Beach (Scenic Gulf Dr., between Alamo Street and S. Geronimo Street) Summer 2019
• Seagrove Beach (30A, between Somerset Bridge Rd. and Sugar Ln.) Summer 2019
• Dune Allen Beach (30A, between Hilltop Dr. and Woodward Dr.) Summer 2019

New Bay Access

• Bayside Ranchettes (Now open! 327 E. Mitchell Ave)

New Parking Areas

• Grayton Beach at 30A/CR 283 (68 spaces)
• Ft. Panic at Dune Allen (13 spaces)
• Ed Walline Regional Beach Access at 30A/CR 393 (17 spaces)
• Blue Mountain Beach at 30A/Hwy 83 (12 spaces)
• Eastern Lake at 30A/Eastern Lake Rd (6 spaces)

Garbage Collection

Code Enforced
Brown Bag Code Enforcement Officers patrol the beach seven days each week from 5:30 am to 11:30 pm, and in 2017 tracked 7,700 interactions, mostly focused on glass containers, lights at the beach, beach dog permits, resident-related issues, and customary use laws.

MAINTENANCE + CLEANUP
along 20 miles of beach

$4.4 MILLION IN DESTINATION IMPROVEMENTS
36 MILES OF PUBLIC ROADS & HWYS
8 REGIONAL BEACH ACCESS POINTS Complete with parking, restrooms and garbage stations
44 NEIGHBORHOOD BEACH ACCESS POINTS
8 BAY & LAKE ACCESS POINTS
17 LOCAL PARKS

2017 VISITOR TRENDS

IN-FUN: 380% \ 112,400 in 2016 \ 295,000 in 2017
OUT-FUN: 350% \ 112,400 in 2016 \ 471,600 in 2017

PR + COMMUNICATIONS

Public Relations efforts reflect in South Walton’s inclusion in media outlets such as Essential Living, USA Today, Southern Living and many more!

Communications works to develop the South Walton story and help connect our community partners with opportunities that strengthen their business.

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17,000 PEOPLE CAME INTO THE VISITOR CENTER IN 2017

12 MEETING TRADE SHOWS reaching 23,500 meeting planners
5 CONSUMER SHOWS reaching 29,400 consumers

MARTKETING

Targeted advertising spans South Walton top-themed with our legal visitors, strengthens our brand, and reaches out to new markets to help create balanced and robust demand.

$1 SPENT = $323 in visitor spending

BEACH CODE ENFORCEMENT – BEACH ACCESS MASTERS – BEACH MAINTENANCE – BEACH SAFETY PROGRAM

2 New Regional Beach Accesses
Since August 2016, Visit South Walton has purchased seven beachfront parcels for a total of 747 feet of beachfront to be used as three new regional access points, along with a 7.35 acre parcel right next to a new beach parking lot in the Grayton Beach area. The total spend for these properties is $25.6 million, all paid for by tourist revenue.

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