



— VISIT — HAYWOOD

WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS

Destination Master Plan | Interim Recovery Plan

PURPOSE OF PROPOSED RECOVERY TRANSITION PLAN

October 2024 – September 2026

The Haywood County Destination Master Plan remains essential, outlining long-term goals and strategies backed by extensive research, stakeholder input, and expert insights—crucial for sustainable growth and effective tourism management. However, the immediate demands of recovery from Hurricane Helene necessitate a transitional approach.

To bridge the gap between urgent recovery actions and our long-term vision, the DMP Advisory Planning Team has developed an interim framework. This framework divides the recovery process into manageable phases, allowing the TDA to prioritize immediate recovery needs while staying aligned with the Master Plan's objectives. It includes best practices for recovery management and resilience, integrating these with short-term objectives – many pulled directly from the Master Plan.

We will adapt this framework into a detailed work plan, customizing timelines and resources as needed. It's important to understand that this document serves as a dynamic, adaptable guide outlining proposed recovery actions and strategic objectives, not an exhaustive list of all activities to be undertaken over the next 24 months.

**Priorities listed in blue italics on the following pages are directly pulled from the comprehensive master plan.*

OVERVIEW

Organizational Actions	Stakeholder Engagement	Communications	Infrastructure and Assets
Objective: Align internal resources and teams to support both immediate recovery efforts and long-term master plan goals. Priorities: Allocate staffing and financial resources effectively; develop a comprehensive emergency response plan. Outcomes: Maintain operational stability while laying the groundwork for sustained recovery and future organizational success.	Objective: Maintain strong, collaborative relationships with key stakeholders during the recovery period and beyond. Priorities: Engage local businesses, residents, and public agencies through regular communication and collaborative recovery and resilience planning. Outcome: Foster a sense of shared responsibility for recovery while ensuring that stakeholder needs and concerns are addressed.	Objective: Ensure clear and consistent updates on recovery progress while building brand awareness for future tourism. Priorities: Implement a communications strategy balancing recovery updates and tourism promotion. Outcome: Maintain public trust, keep stakeholders informed, and ensure a smooth transition from recovery to future planning phases.	Objective: Monitor the restoration of key tourism infrastructure and plan for future asset development and stewardship. Priorities: Inventory critical tourism and recreational assets; assess long-term infrastructure needs in alignment with master plan goals. Outcome: Reopen essential tourism assets while setting the foundation for sustainable growth in line with the 10-year master plan.

MONTHS 1 – 2: Immediate Response

Organizational Actions	Stakeholder Engagement	Infrastructure and Assets
PRIORITIES: • Evaluate current resource allocations and adjust roles or staffing to support immediate recovery efforts. • Establish temporary task forces to manage urgent recovery-related operations. ACTIONS: • Shift office-wide focus to ascertaining and disseminating conditions, recovery, and resources information. • Collaborate with HCHHS to expand FEMA transitional housing options.	PRIORITIES: • Engage local businesses, government agencies, and residents to ensure alignment on recovery goals. • Convene recovery-focused meeting(s) with key stakeholders to address pressing needs. • Define any recovery milestones that may inform communications on tourism services. ACTIONS: • Collaborate with local PIOs on visitor and partner messaging. • Communicate closely with government officials and emergency services to ensure alignment. • Publish webpage of recovery resources for partners on HaywoodTDA.com.	PRIORITIES: • Monitor the immediate restoration of critical tourism assets and infrastructure (e.g., roads, trails, attractions). • Inventory and share information from safety appraisals of damaged sites to ensure visitor and resident safety. ACTIONS: • Maintain an extensive Travel Alerts & Information page on VisitHaywood.com. • Create & update webpage to share lists of open & closed local businesses. • Create & update webpage to encourage online shopping from local small businesses.

MONTHS 1 – 2: Immediate Response

Communications

PRIORITIES:

- Develop and disseminate public messaging regarding the county’s recovery status and safety protocols.
- Maintain regular communication welcoming visitors while setting expectations.
- Promote volunteer corps and asset stewardship (clean up) activities.
- Work with key partners on all immediate response items related to communications, marketing and public relations.

ACTIONS:

- Send weekly update emails to partners and visitors in the first weeks of recovery.
- Launch an immediate paid advertising response, including issuing travel alerts and then moving into general awareness messaging related to current travel information for visitors.
- Provide Visit NC advertising assets to represent Haywood County in their “Support NC’s Southern Mountains” campaign.
- Launch a “Shop Local” holiday campaign to rally stakeholders to shop locally.
- Create a holiday ornament to be sold throughout Haywood County as well as online, with proceeds supporting hurricane recovery.
- Launch an Ice Fest-specific paid advertising campaign to generate awareness and drive ticket purchases for the late January event.

MONTHS 3 – 12: Transition Period

Organizational Actions	Stakeholder Engagement	Communications	Infrastructure and Assets
PRIORITIES: • Implement short-term operational shifts to accommodate ongoing recovery needs and future planning. • Identify new roles or partnerships to support extended recovery efforts and future attention to stewardship and resilience. • <i>Allocate annual budget resources to align with plan actions.</i> • <i>Co-develop an emergency communication and response plan for tourism to ensure the safety of visitors through robust emergency preparedness and response strategies.</i>	PRIORITIES: • Continue collaboration with local businesses and public agencies to ensure recovery efforts are on track. • Focus on maintaining community trust through transparency and regular updates.	PRIORITIES: • <i>Leverage the new Visit Haywood brand identity to strengthen external perceptions.</i> • <i>Target high-value visitor segments and foster inclusiveness.</i> • <i>Establish tourism stewardship messaging and promotion as part of the destination's brand value.</i> • Develop and distribute a consumer perception survey to gauge market interest leading up to the one-year anniversary of the hurricane.	PRIORITIES: • Begin phased rebuilding of damaged assets, prioritizing long-term resilience and sustainability. • Explore funding options for rebuilding and/or developing projects that align with sustainable development goals.

MONTHS 12 – 18: Intermediate Planning

Organizational Actions	Stakeholder Engagement	Communications	Infrastructure and Assets
PRIORITIES: • Begin re-engaging with long-term Master Plan objectives, focusing on sustainability and strategic alignment.	PRIORITIES: • Begin re-engaging external partners to discuss long-term goals and recovery outcomes. • Initiate planning for collaborative projects with stakeholders, particularly in outdoor recreation and stewardship.	PRIORITIES: • Build brand awareness, continue to target high-value visitor segments and begin to reach out to new/different visitor segments. Continually welcome visitors in target markets. • Shift messaging toward future tourism marketing and product development opportunities.	PRIORITIES: • Begin discussions on product development that aligns with the Master Plan’s long-term goals for sustainable asset management.

MONTHS 19 – 24: Moving Forward to the Future

Organizational Actions	Stakeholder Engagement	Communications	Infrastructure and Assets
PRIORITIES: - Fully transition to long-term strategic planning. <i>Realign the TDA organization given its new roles and responsibilities, especially as it relates to destination development, advocacy and stewardship and related resources.</i> <i>Formulate and build support for a multiyear TDA operational plan covering marketing, sales and services, product development, tourism advocacy and stewardship, and resource development and management.</i>	PRIORITIES: <i>Nourish community, industry and government partnerships through effective research to demonstrate tourism benefits.</i> - Reconnect with external partners, both local and regional, to resume long-term planning initiatives. <i>Establish a Destination Stewardship Council to oversee activities that enhance community assets and promote responsible and regenerative tourism.</i>	PRIORITIES: - Continue to build brand awareness in targeted visitor markets and welcome visitors. - Integrate long-term stewardship and resilience messaging, building excitement for future tourism growth. - Continue transparent communications with the public and stakeholders about ongoing recovery and future opportunities.	PRIORITIES: - Shift focus to sustainable infrastructure development. <i>Advocate for outdoor recreation projects that are in line with destination vision for sustainable growth and can have immediate return on investment.</i> - Begin implementing long-term infrastructure improvements that align with the Master Plan and sustainability priorities.