

# Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce

## **TOURISM AND BUSINESS TRAVEL**

The Loudoun County Chamber recognizes the quality of life and economic benefits that a thriving tourism destination contributes to Loudoun County. The Chamber also recognizes that tourism and travel does not just occur and that a thriving destination requires marketing, promotion, and tourism coordination and development.

The Chamber supports Visit Loudoun's continued status as the recognized Destination Marketing Organization for Loudoun County. Because of the economic advantages offered by a robust visitor and conference/meetings industry, from both business and leisure travel, the Chamber supports an integrated, well-funded approach to marketing Loudoun as a visitor destination by Visit Loudoun. We believe that Loudoun's destination marketing and long-term and sustained funding strategy must place high priority on those activities that generate the most tax revenue, while creating economic opportunities for County businesses with the domestic and international leisure visitor, sports and events, and conference/meetings industry. Indoor and outdoor sporting, performing arts, museums, and multi-purpose venues, in particular, deserve careful consideration to enhance the experience of the leisure and business traveler, as well as to attract more businesses to the County, especially in off-peak times of the year.

In addition, the Chamber supports inclusion of high-value business sectors and corridors beyond those traditionally associated with tourism in the County's destination marketing strategy. These would include, but not be limited to, educational facilities like universities or training centers that attract large meetings and groups. In addition, the Chamber recommends that Loudoun's strategy target corporate travel decision makers in order to generate more overnight stays from the County's high value business sectors. The Chamber also recommends continued collaboration and increased coordination and support of marketing efforts between the County, Visit Loudoun and Washington Dulles International Airport to promote existing, and to assist in future-air service development, for leisure, business domestic and international travel.

Given the opportunities to leverage Loudoun's unique tourism assets to benefit business expansion, while generating more leisure trips from the business travel market, the Chamber advocates that Visit

Loudoun and the County continue to implement a comprehensively aligned approach to economic development and its visitor/conference/sports marketing that is driven by measurable performance goals and metrics that ensure the appropriate level of accountability.

These should include seeking state partnerships in regional marketing efforts or providing infrastructure that supports an expanded visitor economy.

The Chamber supports efforts to ensure that all regulations, taxes and zoning ordinances are structured to enable tourism to prosper and will help to distinguish Loudoun County as a preferred destination. The Chamber supports the tourism industry's position that favors the use of transit occupancy taxes (TOT) to promote tourism. The Chamber also encourages the County to include the tourism industry, through Visit Loudoun, in exploring options to fund needed infrastructure projects, especially access and transportation expansion.

As the lodging industry evolves to include a wide range of entities, from individuals renting out space in their homes, to traditional hotels and bed and breakfasts, the Chamber supports a level playing field for all entities that provide lodging options to visitors, including Short-Term Online Rental Market companies. The legal and regulatory environment for this sector should provide for equal tax treatment, transparency and data sharing, adherence to local zoning and safety regulations, and compliance with business licensing.

In addition, the Chamber urges that online hotel room aggregators be held to the same regime with regard to tax collection and remittance as others providing such services.

**GSA Per Diem:**

The removal of Loudoun County from the federal General Services Administration's Washington, D.C. per diem non-standard rate area has resulted in a severe reduction of the per diem rate for the County. The Chamber supports returning Loudoun County to the Washington, D.C., per diem area.