



Western Maryland
Make it. In the Mountains.



Regional Strategic Plan for Business Attraction

Elevating the Outdoors

**Downstream
Strategies**



Ideas that sustain.

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PROJECT TEAM

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Regional Strategic Plan for Business Attraction is the third of three linked reports that comprise a marketing plan to retain and recruit outdoor recreation and lifestyle manufacturing businesses and employees to Western Maryland. The first report, a Manufacturing Business Attraction Analysis, assesses the potential growth of four outdoor recreation and lifestyle manufacturing industry clusters that have great potential in the region: (1) apparel; (2) outdoor vehicles, boats, parts, and accessories; (3) timber/wood; and (4) specialty foods. The second report, a Tourism Business Expansion Analysis, broadens the analysis beyond manufacturing businesses to include lodging, dining, and retail establishments that cater to Western Maryland's increasing numbers of visitors.

This Regional Strategic Plan for Business Attraction, together with the accompanying Marketing/Sales Pitch Packet, set the stage for implementation. Overall, the initiative's goal is to fully develop Allegany and Garrett counties' potential as an outdoor recreation and lifestyle manufacturing hub and to create jobs, leverage private investment, and use the region's access to natural resources as a marketing tool.

As illustrated in Figure 1, Allegany and Garrett counties are home to a wide variety of outdoor recreation and lifestyle assets, which are described in more detail in the Manufacturing Business Attraction Analysis. These two counties are home to 170,000 acres of state parks and state forests, which accounts for 31 percent of all public acreage owned by the State of Maryland. The counties have over 500 miles of developed trail systems, one national park, three state forests, and 12 state parks.

Because Western Maryland offers such a wide range of experiences for visitors, its visitors are extremely diverse. Many engage in water-based recreation on Deep Creek Lake, including jet skiing, fishing, sailing, kayaking, water skiing, and pleasure boating. Visitors also fish, boat, and float on the Youghiogheny River, Savage River, Savage River Reservoir, North Branch of the Potomac River, Jennings Randolph Lake, and other water destinations across Western Maryland.

A wide variety of land-based outdoor recreation opportunities are available for hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, rock climbing, bird watching, camping, horseback riding, and hunting. Visitors also traverse the Great Allegany Passage (GAP) trail and the C&O Canal Towpath in Allegany County.

Wisp Resort in Garrett County is the only downhill ski resort in Maryland, and cross-country skiing is popular in Western Maryland at state parks and state forests and on private land.

eBikes and off-road vehicles (ORVs) are also commonly used, where permitted. The region also offers numerous heritage tourism attractions.

While many of the most popular destinations are public lands (state parks, state forests, wildlife management areas), private businesses such as Wisp Resort, outfitters, lodging establishments, and dining establishments are frequent destinations and provide important services to visitors.

In this report, we divide visitors into seven broad segments, including:

- **Public land visitors.** Outdoor enthusiasts visiting Western Maryland's state parks and state forests engage in a wide variety of activities. What they have in common is the specific geographic areas in which they recreate.
- **ORV enthusiasts.** Permits are available to ride ORVs on county roads, and ORVs can also be used in private hunting clubs and state forests; however, many visitors using ORVs will be found at Wolf Den Run State Park in Kitzmiller, which is designed for ORV riding.

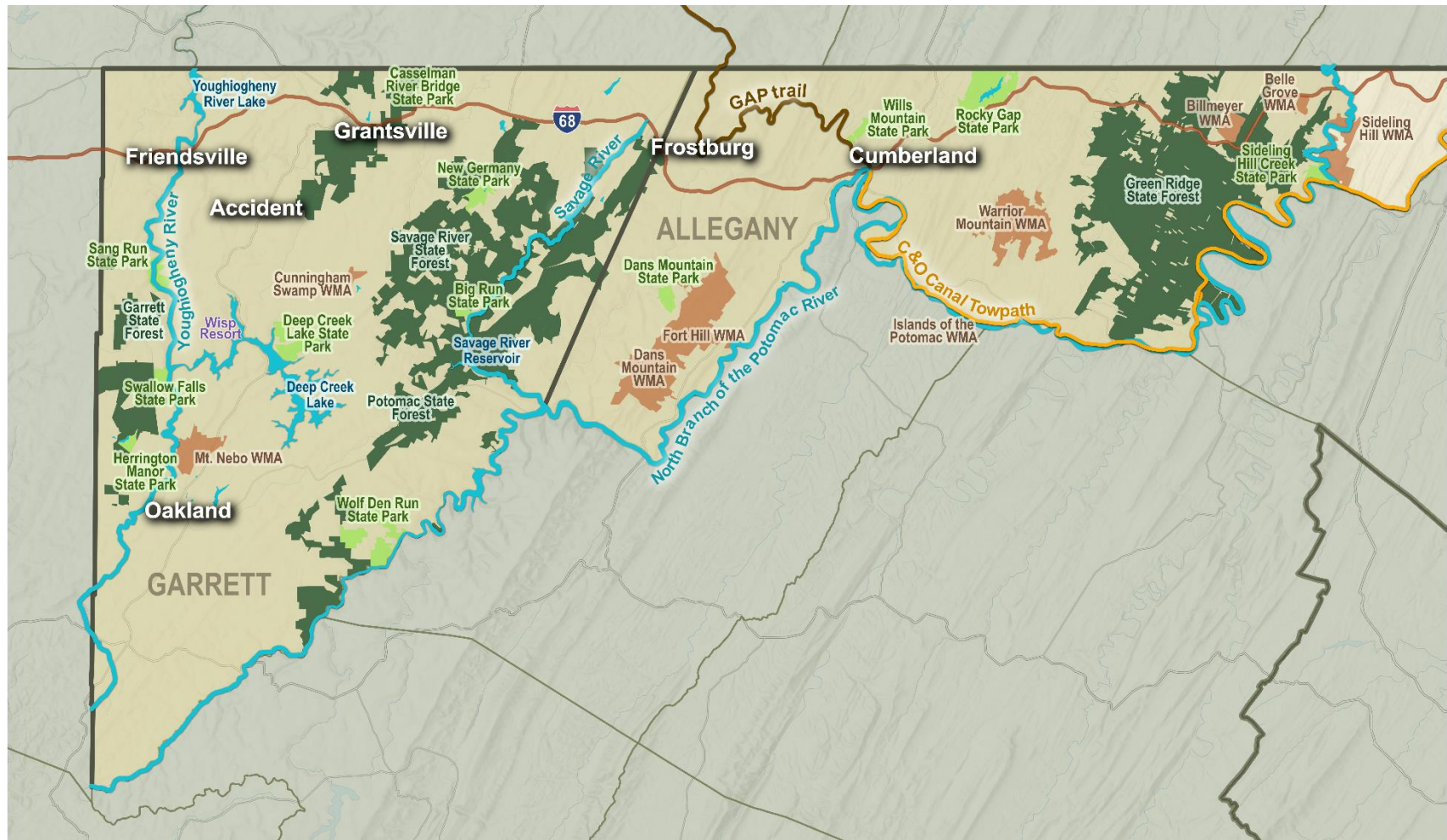
- **River and lake users.** While many river and lake users will recreate at state parks and state forests, others will fish, boat, or float elsewhere, including, for example, the Youghiogheny River, North Branch of the Potomac River, Deep Creek Lake, Savage River, and Jennings Randolph Lake.
- **Long-distance trail users.** The GAP trail and the C&O Canal Towpath both attract trail users to Allegany County. Some bicycle riders pass quickly through the county as part of a long-distance trip, while other users will spend more time and money in the county.
- **Downhill skiers.** Downhill skiers are concentrated in the Wisp and Deep Creek Lake area because Wisp Resort is the only downhill ski resort in Maryland.
- **Second-home owners.** The second-home market is particularly strong in the vicinity of Deep Creek Lake.
- **Heritage tourists.** Popular historical sites are scattered across both Allegany and Garrett counties.

Some visitors come to Western Maryland for a single purpose—for example, they may ski at Wisp or ride their ORV at Wolf Den Run State Park. Other visitors fall within more than one of these segments—for example, they may hike and camp in a state park and raft on the Youghiogheny River. Still, these segments help tailor the advertising approach so that advertisements are placed in the right locations in the right seasons, and so that the creative speaks to visitors in specific segments.

The messaging strategy and advertising assets in Chapters 2 and 3 are broadly targeted to appeal to all of these types of visitors; however, the plan in Chapter 4 provides specific recommendations for each segment.

Allegany and Garrett counties already attract more than 2 million visitors per year, and the number of overnight and day visitors has generally increased year-over-year. Both counties are actively marketing their outdoor recreation assets to prospective visitors, and these efforts have been successful. This Regional Strategic Plan for Business Attraction builds upon that success, with the goal of converting visitors to residents who will move to Western Maryland to start outdoor recreation and lifestyle manufacturing businesses and to work at those businesses.

Figure 1: Key existing outdoor recreation and lifestyle assets



2. MESSAGING STRATEGY

To develop a messaging strategy, we conducted interviews with economic development practitioners, business owners, and local government officials from Allegany and Garrett counties (See Appendix B of the Manufacturing Business Attraction Analysis). Also, Steering Committee meetings for this project were used as focus groups to agree on a 30-second pitch as well as key messaging to recruit business owners to start outdoor recreation and lifestyle manufacturing businesses in Western Maryland (See Section 2.1) and to recruit workers (See Section 2.2).

Thirty-second pitch

Some say there is magic in the mountains of Western Maryland. An outdoor enthusiast's paradise that is also ripe for business development.

It's the beauty from each mountain horizon, the whitewater rivers, lakes and trout streams, the ski slopes and trails for miles. And it's our supportive community and proximity to the country's major metropolitan areas that make Allegany and Garrett counties the ultimate home for manufacturing outdoor recreation products and for the outdoor lifestyle you desire.

If you have a love of the outdoors and the business vision, come to Western Maryland and realize you have what it takes to...

Make it. In the mountains.

2.1 Key messaging for manufacturing recruitment

The following statements provide a bank of messaging for use in marketing efforts targeted toward business owners and entrepreneurs.

- If you have a passion for the outdoors and want to live, work and play in an area with an abundance of outdoor recreation, Western Maryland is the perfect place for you.
- Western Maryland is the outdoor enthusiasts' paradise! Allegany and Garrett counties offer four seasons of outdoor recreation, including (but not limited to) hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing & snowboarding, biking, rock climbing, world-class whitewater rafting, kayaking, recreational boating, and off-road vehicle trails.
- Outdoor recreation manufacturing in Western Maryland makes perfect sense. The region's rivers, trails, forests, and parks are perfect for researching and testing outdoor recreation products made here.
- If you are searching for an area to relocate or start your manufacturing business, Garrett and Allegany counties have an abundance of land, unoccupied buildings and usable business parks with existing infrastructure in place.
- Garrett and Allegany counties are ideal locations for manufacturing businesses. Interstate access provides easy access to major markets.
- As a business owner in Garrett or Allegany county, you will find a supportive and nurturing business community that will help your business succeed.
- Garrett and Allegany counties offer financial incentives for manufacturing businesses, including considerable tax credits, government assistance and affordable property.
- Experience demonstrates that workers will come to Garrett and Allegany counties for good job opportunities.

- Educational institutions in Garrett and Allegany counties are nimble and can easily pivot and update their training programs to support a new workforce.
- Western Maryland has an abundance of natural resources, including sustainable and certified timber that can be used to create outdoor recreation products.
- Western Maryland’s workers have demonstrated a strong work ethic over many years.
- Western Maryland offers not only a great quality of life for business owners and their employees, but also offers the ideal work/life balance – in particular for those who love the outdoors.
- The Great Allegheny Passage trail has set the tone for the great things to come to Allegany County, attracting over a million users every year.
- Home to the state’s only ski resort, Wisp Resort, and Deep Creek Lake, Maryland’s largest freshwater lake, Garrett County attracts 1.4 million visitors annually.
- Unique experiences and exciting developments are on the horizon for Western Maryland that will attract even more visitors to the area, including the new ORV trails at Wolf Den Run State Park, Canal Place River Park in downtown Cumberland and Wills Mountain State Park, with an emphasis on rock climbing.
- Garrett and Allegany counties are working hard to create affordable housing, with major developments in the works.

2.2 Key messaging for workforce recruitment

The following statements provide a bank of messaging for use in marketing efforts targeted toward workers. Some statements repeat those provided for business owners and entrepreneurs.

- Western Maryland is the outdoor enthusiasts’ paradise! Allegany and Garrett counties offer 170,000 acres of public land with four seasons of outdoor recreation, including (but not limited to) hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing & snowboarding, biking, rock climbing, world-class whitewater rafting, kayaking, recreational boating and off-road vehicle trails.
- Garrett and Allegany counties offer a great quality of life and the ideal opportunity to craft your own work/life balance.
- With a reputation for safe communities, excellent schools and competitive wages, Western Maryland is a great place to raise a family.
- Not only can you live, work and play in Western Maryland, but there are also multiple choices for higher education and workforce training.
- Only two to three hours from major metropolitan areas, Western Maryland offers an escape from the hustle and bustle of the city with amazing outdoor recreation opportunities – all with a lower cost of living.
- Garrett and Allegany counties offer a combined 600 miles of biking and hiking trails, numerous lakes, rivers, streams, and waterfalls and 170,000 acres of public land, including 12 state parks, three state forests and one national park.
- Allegany and Garrett counties are working hard to create affordable housing in the area, with major developments in the works.
- Situated along the river, with beautiful architecture, boutiques, restaurants and trails, downtown Cumberland is the quintessential walking community.
- With the outdoors at your fingertips, living in Western Maryland provides an opportunity to work hard and play hard.
- Living in Allegany and Garrett counties provides residents the opportunity to explore the great outdoors. Unique experiences include the Great Allegheny Passage trail, the C&O Canal Towpath, and new ORV trails at Wolf Den Run State Park. Exciting developments in the works include the Canal Place River Park in downtown Cumberland and Wills Mountain State Park.

3. ADVERTISING ASSETS

While this report describes each of the advertising assets created for the project, the assets themselves are provided as separate deliverables in the accompanying Marketing/Sales Pitch Packet. Assets include:

- a video targeting business owners and entrepreneurs,
- a video targeting workers,
- a photo bank,
- example billboards,
- example print advertisements,
- example digital advertisements, and
- a brochure.

3.1 Videos

We have produced two high-definition videos optimized for website and social media applications.

3.1.1 Manufacturing recruitment

The first video focusing on manufacturing recruitment is at:
<https://vimeo.com/826308136/99920afc35?share=copy>.

Purpose

The purpose of the first video is to shed light on Western Maryland and to showcase what makes Allegany and Garrett counties a desirable place to live and to start or relocate a business.

Style

This video was shot with an earthy and inspirational feel. Watching it should be a sensory immersion type of experience, providing the viewer with a true sense of the beauty of the area. We want it to feel organic in the storytelling.

Creative concept

The video features stories of three individuals who have made their way to Western Maryland and decided to relocate and start a business. What brought them here? What was the feeling they had when they got here? What made them stay? What is their experience and what are the opportunities for others?

Messages

- Western Maryland is the perfect place for outdoor lovers to live and to work.
- Western Maryland is the outdoor enthusiasts' paradise! Allegany and Garrett Counties offer four seasons of outdoor recreation, including (but not limited to) hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing & snowboarding, biking, rock climbing, world-class whitewater rafting, kayaking, recreational boating and off-road vehicle trails.
- The draw of Western Maryland. What brought them here. The feeling they had when they got here. And what made them stay.
- What it means to be able to play in the same place you live and work.
- The work/life balance and how it is different here.

- The calm and serenity of Western Maryland compared to the major metropolitan areas that they came from.
- How living and owning a business in Western Maryland has positively impacted their lives and their business success.
- The experience of starting/building a business here and the nurturing support of the business community.
- The opportunities for other types of businesses (e.g., manufacturing) and why it makes sense.
- Highlight some of the reasons why others should consider starting/relocating a business here.
- Why this was the right decision for them and how it could benefit others.

3.1.2 Workforce recruitment

The second video focusing on workforce recruitment is at:
<https://vimeo.com/827048411/29fed1f803?share=copy>.

Purpose

The purpose of the second video is to attract a workforce to the Western Maryland for outdoor recreation manufacturing jobs.

Style

This video was also shot with an earthy and inspirational feel. Watching it should be a sensory immersion type of experience, providing the viewer with a true sense of the beauty of the area. We want it to feel organic in the storytelling.

Creative concept

Similar to the manufacturing video, the workforce video shares the stories of employees of four Western Maryland companies and what it means to live, work, and play in the region.

Messages

- Western Maryland is the outdoor enthusiasts' paradise! Allegany and Garrett Counties offer four seasons of outdoor recreation, including (but not limited to) hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing & snowboarding, biking, rock climbing, world-class whitewater rafting, kayaking, recreational boating and off-road vehicle trails.
- Their story. What brought them here. The feeling they had when they got here. And what made them stay.
- What it means to be able to play in the same place you live and work.
- Garrett and Allegany counties offer a great quality of life and the ideal work/life balance.
- With a reputation for safe communities with excellent schools and competitive wages, Western Maryland is a great place to raise a family.
- Not only can you live, work and play in Western Maryland, there are also multiple choices for higher education and workforce training.
- Only two to three hours from major metropolitan areas, Western Maryland offers an escape from the hustle and bustle of the city with amazing outdoor recreation opportunities – all with a lower cost of living.

- Allegany and Garrett counties are creating affordable housing in the area, with major developments in the works.
- Situated along the river, with beautiful architecture, boutiques, restaurants and trails, downtown Cumberland is the quintessential walking community.
- With the outdoors at your fingertips, living in Western Maryland provides an opportunity to work hard and play hard.
- Living in Allegany and Garrett counties provides residents the opportunity to explore the great outdoors. Unique experiences include access to The Great Allegheny Passage trail, the C&O Canal Towpath and new off-road vehicle trails at Wolf Den Run State Park. Exciting developments in the works include a River Park in downtown Cumberland and a new state park providing rock climbing opportunities.

3.2 Photo bank

A photo bank with dozens of original photographs is accessible at:
<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/cWqLvDUUMR/files>.

3.3 Advertisements

Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4 provide sample designs for digital ads, print ads, and billboards. These designs integrate the tag line with original photographs from the photo bank and use the color palette shown in Figure 5. This palette uses muted earth tones to convey the manufacturing aspect of this marketing effort, as well as the outdoors. Some colors may be used as accents only.

Figure 2: Example digital ads



Figure 3: Example print ad

You have what it takes to **Make it. In the mountains.**

Some say there is magic in the mountains of Western Maryland.
An outdoor enthusiast's paradise that is also ripe for business development.

It's the beauty from each mountain horizon, the whitewater rivers, lakes and trout streams, the ski slopes and trails for miles. And it's our supportive community and proximity to the country's major metropolitan areas that make Allegany and Garrett counties the ultimate home for manufacturing outdoor recreation products and for the outdoor lifestyle you desire.

Come to Western Maryland and realize, you have what it takes to
make it in the mountains.

Work & play in Western Maryland!
MakItInTheMountains.org



Figure 4: Example billboard



Figure 5: Color palette



3.4 Brochure

The brochure illustrated in Figure 6 is designed to be used in locations such as:

- chambers of commerce;
- county and city buildings;
- state parks and state forests;
- realtors; and
- dining, lodging, and other retail establishments that cater to visitors.

Figure 6: Brochure




Western Maryland
Make it. In the Mountains.

If you have a passion for the outdoors and want to live, work and play in a region with an abundance of outdoor recreation, *Western Maryland is the perfect place for you.*

LEARN MORE AT
MakelItInTheMountains.com



What businesses chose to call Western Maryland home?
Scan to watch the video!

DO BUSINESS IN THE MOUNTAINS

As a business owner in Allegany and Garrett counties, you will find a supportive and nurturing business community that will help you succeed.

The State of Maryland offers tax credits to open your business in Western Maryland, and Allegany and Garrett County economic development leadership will work with you to find an affordable site.

This project was funded through the Appalachian Regional Commission with a match provided by Allegany County, MD; Garrett County, MD; Maryland Department of Commerce and the Maryland Office of Tourism.



MakelItInTheMountains.com



MAKE IT. IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Some say there is magic in the mountains of Western Maryland. An outdoor enthusiast's paradise that is also ripe for business development.

It's the beauty from each mountain horizon, the whitewater rivers, lakes and trout streams, the ski slopes and trails for miles.

And it's our supportive community and proximity to the country's major metropolitan areas that make Allegany and Garrett counties in Maryland the ultimate home for manufacturing outdoor recreation products and for the outdoor lifestyle you desire.

Come to Western Maryland and realize, you have what it takes to *make it in the mountains.*

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD.

With 600 miles of biking and hiking trails, numerous lakes, rivers, streams, and waterfalls and 170,000 acres of public land, including 12 state parks, three state forests and one national park, living in Western Maryland provides an opportunity to work hard and play hard.



Think as big as you want in Western Maryland because the opportunity is here.

Mike Koch
CEO of FireFly Farms



I can wake up and kayak, mountain bike and hike all in the same day and then go to sleep in my own bed.

Angie Shaw
Employee

WESTERN MARYLAND

- ✔ low cost of living
- ✔ great schools
- ✔ outdoor recreation
- ✔ pro business
- ✔ high quality of life
- ✔ untapped resources
- ✔ safe communities
- ✔ active workforce




Want to learn more about working in Western Maryland?
Scan to watch the video!

4. MARKETING AND ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

A multimedia marketing and advertising campaign will create a cohesive message that highlights the unique benefits and resources that Western Maryland has to offer. Through targeted messaging and media placements, Allegany and Garrett counties can create and reinforce an attractive brand that appeals to businesses looking to relocate or expand, and to workers considering calling Western Maryland home. A well-designed multimedia marketing strategy also uses multiple channels to reach potential businesses and workers, including videos, social media, print, and digital advertising.

The digital advertising component of this plan, documented in Section 4.1, includes a new landing page, digital advertising, retargeting advertising, over-the-top video advertising, and geofencing—all of which is designed to engage visitors while they are in Western Maryland and after they return home. The digital marketing is complemented by traditional marketing, as described in Section 4.2, which is designed to reach visitors while they are in Allegany and Garrett counties.

4.1 Digital advertising

4.1.1 Landing page

The URL MakeItInTheMountains.com has been secured for a landing page for this campaign, but the website has not been designed yet. We recommend that this be a multimedia landing page comprised of the messaging, photography, videography, and graphics created for this campaign, designed to be the destination for all of the specific types of advertising included in this plan—both digital and traditional.

It should include resources and links to connect people interested in moving to Western Maryland with economic development offices or other appropriate offices for both Allegany and Garrett counties.

It should also include a call to action: most likely a form that would contact the appropriate people from Allegany and/or Garrett County for prompt follow-up. Follow-up could be conducted by county economic development representatives or, potentially, by existing Western Maryland business owners.

Other components of the landing page should be considered, depending on decisions made by Allegany and Garrett county representatives on integrating a relocation program (See Section 5.2) or an ambassador program (See Section 5.3).

4.1.2 Digital advertising

Digital advertisements are provided as part of the Marketing/Sales Pitch Packet; Figure 2 illustrates an example. Digital advertising on a third-party website is an effective way to connect directly with your target audience and collect data to optimize the effectiveness of your advertising strategy. Standard types of data include reach, clicks, and click-through ratio.

Because the campaign message is that Western Maryland is the ultimate outdoor recreation manufacturing hub, we recommend placing advertisements on third-party websites that target visitors to Allegany and Garrett counties while they are visiting the region.

4.1.3 Retargeting advertising

Retargeting advertising uses digital advertising to continue to remind the target audience of the campaign. This can be effective for generating qualified leads because it follows users home who may be thinking about relocating to Western Maryland.

For example, an outdoor enthusiast could be spending time on an outdoor recreation website but chooses not to click on the advertisement at that time. We would then target that person with additional advertising—even after they return home—that communicates that Garrett and Allegany counties are great places to play, work, and start a business. This would greatly increase the chances of that person starting a business or applying for a job in Western Maryland in the future.

Retargeting advertising, in conjunction with geotargeting, can also be used to identify locations to which visitors return. It is therefore a powerful tool that can be used to identify the geography of a visitor's primary residence.

4.1.4 Over-the-top video advertising

Two videos are provided as part of the Marketing/Sales Pitch Packet (See Section 3.1). Like commercials, over-the-top (OTT) video advertising forces the target audience to direct their attention to the advertisement for a short period of time. Unlike traditional commercials, OTT video advertising targets an audience no matter how they are experiencing their media: phones, tablets, computers, or televisions. It also delivers data about what viewers watch and how they behave to better optimize the advertising strategy.

Both videos produced for this project could be run as OTT video advertisements when viewers watch other outdoor recreation–related videos. This would present the opportunities for outdoor recreation manufacturing in Western Maryland to people most likely to respond and act.

Some OTT platforms allow long videos to be used as OTT advertisements. After 15 or 30 seconds, the platforms allow viewers to skip the rest of the advertisement. Best practice, however, is to create shorter, 15-second and 30-second advertisements for use on OTT platforms, in order to ensure that the most impactful portion of the ad and the call to action will be seen.

OTT platforms change frequently and should be researched when it is time to start running the OTT video advertisements; however, the following OTT platforms would be recommended for a campaign starting at the time that this report is released:

- Youtube,
- Hulu,
- Disney, and
- Netflix.

4.1.5 Geofencing

Geofencing allows digital advertising to be served on people's mobile devices when they are in a specific, pre-defined location. Locations can be drawn widely, such as a county, or narrowly, such as a state park or ski lodge. Section 4.3 provides suggestions for geofencing based on different segments of the visiting population.

4.2 Traditional advertising

Print advertisements and billboards are provided as part of the Marketing/Sales Pitch Packet; Figure 3 and Figure 4 provide examples. Integrating traditional advertising into the plan will ensure that the campaign communicates with people who are disconnected from the internet. It will also reinforce the digital advertising campaign for people with internet access.

Unlike digital advertising, which follows people home after their visit is complete, traditional advertising is focused on Western Maryland. Delivering the message that Garrett County and Allegany County are great places to live and work—while people are actively experiencing the outdoors—could greatly reinforce the idea with people who are already recreating in the area.

Table 1 summarizes several traditional opportunities to reach outdoor enthusiasts who are visiting the region via billboards, visitor guides, other magazines, trail information, and distribution of the brochure.

4.3 Targeting segments of the visiting population

For each of the seven broad segments of visitors, we offer observations helpful in targeting those specific visitors with the marketing and advertising campaign. The example digital ads, print ads, and billboards can be used for each of these segments; however, the photo bank, supplemented with photos already in the possession of Allegany and Garrett counties, can be used to tailor images to specific segments.

4.3.1 Public land visitors

Whether state park and state forest visitors are engaging in hiking or camping, boating or fishing, or any other outdoor recreation activity, one thing they have in common is the geographic areas in which they recreate. The region's 12 state parks are well-suited to using geofencing for digital advertising. The chosen locations could include the entire state park footprint, certain key locations such as camping areas or lodges, and/or gateway communities.

Geofencing can be similarly used for Western Maryland's three state forests, but consideration should be given to the fact that the forests are larger and, in some cases, more remote than the parks. Visitors to state forests may also be more dispersed.

Traditional advertising targeted to this segment of visitors should focus on billboards in gateway communities to state parks and state forests, as well as ensuring that "Make it. In the mountains." brochures are readily available at state parks and state forests and other appropriate nearby locations.

While people visit state parks and state forests year-round, the most cost-effective advertising will target peak seasons when, for example, campgrounds are full.

Maryland Department of Natural Resources manages Maryland's state parks and state forests. Typically, only aggregate visitor counts are published; however, requests for visitor counts for specific parks and forests can be filed with the agency.

Table 1: Traditional advertising opportunities in Western Maryland

Type	Description	More information
Billboards	There are many opportunities to reach visitors via billboards across Western Maryland. Discussions with each company would identify specific billboards most likely to be seen by each segment of the visiting population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kegerreis: https://kegerreis.com/maryland.html • OOH Media: https://www.timesoohmedia.com/billboard-costs/md/cumberland.php • Outdoor Advertising Center: https://www.outdooradvertisingcenter.com/billboard-advertising-cumberland-md.php • Kenney Signs: https://kenneysigns.com/
Visitors & Relocation Guide of Garrett County & Deep Creek Lake	Published for the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, this guide reaches visitors and second-home owners. Garrett County Business Development already publishes an ad targeting visitors with a message related to starting or expanding businesses in the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023/2024 edition: https://digital-editions.todaymediacustom.com/garrett-county/visitors-guide/2023/#p=1
Visit Mountain Maryland Destination Guide	Published for Allegany County Tourism, this guide reaches visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most recent edition: https://online.flipbuilder.com/qxsc/skvr/ • Advertising information: https://www.nelsonmarketingandpublishing.com/advertising-1
The Lake-Front Magazine	The Lake-Front Magazine is a monthly magazine that reaches visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://lakefrontmagazine.com/advertise/
Menu Guide Magazine	The Menu Guide Magazine is published twice per year, providing information about dining options in Garrett County to visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://deepcreekdining.com/
GAP Trail	The GAP Trail provides opportunities to reach trail users by advertising on the www.gaptrail.org website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital media kit: https://gaptrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-GAP-Conservancy-Digital-Media-Kit.pdf • Doug Riegner, Director of Community Relations: (724) 309-4041, driegner@gaptrail.org
Brochures	The brochure produced for this project should be made widely available at locations frequented by visitors, including dining and lodging establishments, realtors, chambers of commerce, visitor centers, and rest areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realtors in Allegany County: https://members.gcbr.org/ • Realtors in Garrett County: https://members.gcbr.org/office-directory/FindStartsWith?term=%23%21

4.3.2 ORV enthusiasts

Geofencing at Wolf Den Run State Park would be particularly effective at reaching ORV enthusiasts. As with state parks in general, geofencing could include the entire park footprint, camping areas, and/or the gateway community of Kitzmiller. It should also focus on peak seasons for ORV enthusiasts.

Traditional advertising targeted specifically to ORV enthusiasts should focus on billboards in Kitzmiller, as well as ensuring that “Make it. In the mountains.” brochures are readily available at Wolf Den Run State Park and other appropriate nearby locations.

4.3.3 River and lake users

While many river and lake users will recreate at state parks and state forests, others will fish, boat, or float elsewhere, including, for example, the Youghiogheny River, North Branch of the Potomac River, Deep Creek Lake, Savage River, and Jennings Randolph Lake. With a focus on the more heavily used portions of these resources, these areas can be geofenced for digital advertising. Billboards can also be placed along access routes.

Many river and lake users hire outfitters; for this reason, outfitters should be approached regarding their willingness to distribute “Make it. In the mountains.” brochures. Brochures should also be readily available at other appropriate nearby locations.

4.3.4 Long-distance trail users

The GAP trail and the C&O Canal Towpath may also be amenable to geofencing; however, because of their linear configuration, consideration should be given to including an appropriate buffer distance from the trail itself, as well as to including key gateway communities and outdoor recreation and heritage tourism sites alongside and with easy access to the trails.

Traditional advertising targeted to long-distance trail users should focus on billboards close to or along access routes to GAP trail and the C&O Canal Towpath access points. Brochures should also be readily available at access points and the major points of interest in Allegany County that are easily accessible from these trails.

In 2021, approximately 78,000 people used the GAP Trail in Cumberland, and approximately 72,000 people used the GAP Trail in Frostburg (Herr, 2022).

In 2019, approximately 131,000 visitors who came to the C&O Canal Towpath from more than 50 miles away visited Cumberland, and approximately 24,000 visited Frostburg (Rockport Analytics, 2021).

4.3.5 Downhill skiers

Wisp Resort is the only downhill ski resort in Maryland; therefore, serving ads to downhill skiers should focus on the resort itself, including the lodge. Including the broader Deep Creek Lake area would also likely reach downhill skiers.

Traditional advertising targeted to downhill skiers should focus on billboards located close to Wisp Resort and in the broader Deep Creek Lake area. Brochures should also be readily available at Wisp Resort and across the Deep Creek Lake area.

While Wisp Resort presumably maintains records of the number of downhill skiers visiting its resort each year, it does not publicly release these numbers.

4.3.6 Second-home owners

The second-home market is particularly strong in the vicinity of Deep Creek Lake, and second-home owners may visit during any season. Digital advertising should focus on the Deep Creek Lake area.

Traditional advertising targeted specifically to second-home owners should focus on billboards and brochures in the same area. Advertisements in *The Lake-Front Magazine* and *Menu Guide Magazine* should be considered to reach second-home owners. Further, to the extent possible, realtors should be engaged as to their willingness to help distribute brochures.

To estimate the number of second-home owners, it is suggested that conversations be conducted with Western Maryland realtors. The Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court in Allegany and Garrett counties may also have helpful information that can be used to estimate the number of second-home owners in the region.

4.3.7 Heritage tourists

Heritage tourism sites complement the region's outdoor recreation assets. As documented in the *Tourism Business Expansion Analysis*, heritage tourism sites are found in and around Grantsville (Casselman River Bridge, Spruce Forest Artisan Village), Kitzmiller (Coal Heritage Museum), Westernport (Westernport Heritage Society Museum), and Oldtown (Michael Cresap House)—as well as other locations across Western Maryland.

As with other segments of the visiting population, key methods for targeting heritage tourists include geofencing around specific popular sites and billboards along access routes to those sites. Because heritage tourists tend to be older, print materials should be emphasized by placing brochures at the heritage tourism sites themselves and at appropriate nearby locations.

5. EXPANDING FROM A CAMPAIGN TO A PROGRAM

The previous chapters of this report document messaging, assets, and a marketing and advertising campaign—all with the goal of retaining and recruiting outdoor recreation and lifestyle manufacturing businesses and employees to Western Maryland. This chapter considers other steps that can be taken alongside digital and traditional marketing and advertising to make it even more likely that visitors are turned into local business owners and workers.

5.1 Earned media

Free publicity in print media, online media, and television shows and movies can all help create a buzz about the “Make it. In the mountains.” campaign. Ideally, earned media would specifically mention the “Make it. In the mountains.” campaign; however, other free publicity can certainly add to a growing perception of Western Maryland as a desirable place to live, work, and start a business.

One successful recent example was the filming of a Small Town Christmas episode in Frostburg in 2022, secured by Allegany County Tourism. Aired on the cable television network UPtv, this series visits picturesque small towns across America and showcases the unique ways they celebrate Christmas by highlighting local food, local business, entertainment, and festivities.

A second recent example was Allegany County Tourism’s secured public relations placement on HGTV’s 50 of the Most Charming Small Towns in America, which includes Cumberland with the following description:

“Cumberland, Maryland, was known as the ‘Gateway to the West’ for its vital roads, rails and canals. Today, it draws bikers who connect through the town to two legendary bike trails, the Great Allegheny Passage and C&O Canal Towpath. History buffs and nature lovers come to ride the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad and drive the Historic National Road scenic byway. Cumberland is also a shopping destination for great local, regional and national works of art.”¹

Newspaper and magazine articles, both online and in print, are other examples of earned media that would be more achievable for the “Make it. In the mountains.” campaign if it were newsworthy. One way for the campaign to be newsworthy is to envision it as not just a marketing campaign, but also as a relocation program. Examples of relocation programs are provided in Section 5.2. The ASCEND West Virginia program, for example, garnered significant media attention and earned media in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Atlanta, Georgia; Washington, DC; U.S. News & World Report; and elsewhere.²

5.2 Relocation programs

Western Maryland is not the first region to work systematically to attract new residents, and several cities and states have implemented relocation programs to provide incentives for people to move. While no two programs have identical goals or are directly parallel with the “Make it. In the mountains.” campaign, learning from other successful programs can provide ideas and inspiration for a potential program focused on Western Maryland that can complement the marketing and advertising campaign.

¹ <https://www.hgtv.com/lifestyle/travel/50-of-the-most-charming-small-towns-in-america-pictures>

² See, for example, <https://www.cbsnews.com/pittsburgh/news/west-virginia-cash-for-worker-program-adds-elkins/>, <https://www.atlantamagazine.com/southbound-articles/pay-to-play-a-new-west-virginia-program-offers-enticing-reasons-to-relocate/>, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/2021/10/14/west-virginia-ascend-remote-work/>, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2023/feb/28/west-virginia-lawmakers-hope-25000-tax-credits-ent/>, and <https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2022-06-14/west-virginia-cash-for-worker-program-welcomes-new-residents>.

5.2.1 ASCEND West Virginia

ASCEND West Virginia³ aims to attract remote workers to move to West Virginia by selling the state’s quality of life, with a focus on outdoor recreation. Participants receive a package valued at over \$20,000, which includes:

- \$12,000 cash, including \$10,000 for moving to West Virginia and \$2,000 for the second year;
- free outdoor recreation, including whitewater rafting, downhill skiing, and outdoor gear rentals for participants and their family and friends;
- coworking space;
- social programming, including an outdoor-focused welcome trip to explore popular and hidden outdoor destinations, as well as local community special events and outdoor experiences such as group bike rides, paddleboard yoga, and farm-to-table dinners; and
- professional development and entrepreneurial assistance.

In its first year in 2022, ASCEND West Virginia was already a success, attracting thousands of applicants. Almost 50 participants have moved to the Morgantown area, and approximately 30 are in the process of moving to the Greenbrier Valley. The program is now seeking applicants to move to Elkins.

ASCEND West Virginia aims to attract remote workers, which is different than the “Make it. In the Mountains.” campaign that aims to attract business owners and workers who are physically present in Western Maryland. Still, the program is instructive for several reasons.

First, as documented above, it generated a significant buzz, generating earned media all across the United States.

Second, the package is built around attracting people interested in West Virginia for its quality of life—and most importantly its ready access to world-class outdoor recreation opportunities. This theme overlaps considerably with the “Make it. In the mountains.” campaign. ASCEND West Virginia’s free outdoor recreation and the social programming benefits could be used as a model—but tailored to the specific outdoor recreation assets of Western Maryland.

Third, the package also includes professional development and entrepreneurial assistance, which would be directly applicable to people starting businesses in Allegany and Garrett counties.

³ <https://ascendwv.com/>

5.2.2 Tulsa Remote

Tulsa Remote⁴ started in 2018 and is another successful remote worker relocation program, with similar elements as ASCEND West Virginia, including:

- \$10,000 cash;
- coworking space;
- access to curated apartments and some special housing opportunities; and
- community-building events and meetups to engage with organizations, nonprofits.

In 2020, the program had 50,000 applicants. As of 2021, 800 people had moved to Tulsa as part of the Tulsa Remote program.⁵

Like the ASCEND West Virginia program, Tulsa Remote also generated a significant amount of earned media.⁶

5.2.3 Savannah Technology Workforce Incentive

While ASCEND West Virginia and Tulsa Remote do not focus on a particular industry, the Savannah Technology Workforce Incentive⁷ aims to attract technology workers to the Savannah, Georgia area. The program, established by the Savannah Economic Development Authority, reimburses moving expenses up to \$2,000 for qualified technology workers currently located outside of Savannah.

This program also differs from ASCEND West Virginia and Tulsa Remote in that it does not select a small pool of recipients from those who apply. Instead, the \$2,000 payment is made to those who:

- demonstrate at least three years of verifiable experience,
- relocated to Chatham County with a minimum one-year lease or a property purchase,
- resided in the county for 30 days before applying,
- provide receipts from their move, and
- have a Georgia driver's license with a Chatham County address.

Separate and apart from the Savannah Technology Workforce Incentive, the Savannah Economic Development Authority offers several other corporate incentives in addition to state incentives, including:

- the Facility Rental Assistance Grant, a grant of up to \$12,000 toward office rental for technology firms that create a minimum of 10 new positions; and
- the High Wage Job Creation Grant, a grant of up to \$20,000 for every five high-technology jobs created.

The Savannah Technology Workforce Incentive program, together with the other incentives, is instructive for Western Maryland because of its focus on attracting a particular type of business and worker to the region. It also demonstrates a different model than ASCEND West Virginia and Tulsa Remote by providing benefits to all who qualify, not just to those who are accepted through an application process.

⁴ <https://tulsaremote.com/#benefits>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/realestate/bentonville-arkansas-moving-incentive.html>

⁶ See, for example, <https://fortune.com/2023/01/18/tulsa-remote-workers-study-happy-successful/>, <https://hbr.org/2023/01/tulas-big-bet-on-remote-workers>, <https://www.inc.com/bill-murphy-jr/new-data-on-2000-remote-workers-in-tulsa-shows-what-happens-when-people-move-to-a-low-cost-city.html>, and <https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-tulsa-modest-home-prices-and-wholesome-living-lure-big-city-buyers-11670436172>.

⁷ <https://seda.org/2020/06/seda-establishes-savannah-technology-workforce-incentive/>

5.3 Ambassador programs

Another potential complement to a marketing and advertising campaign would be a regional ambassador program. Many cities have implemented ambassador programs as a non-law enforcement, face-to-face presence to provide services to visitors and residents. These programs have been implemented by large cities such as Charlotte, North Carolina; Orlando, Florida; and Chicago, Illinois, as well as by small cities such as Morgantown, West Virginia.⁸

While no specific examples of ambassador programs at the county or multi-county level were found, some of the concepts of these ambassador programs could help provide another level of contact and communication with visitors to Allegany and Garrett counties.

Many of the existing ambassador programs include communicating with and assisting visitors, whether it be with directions to a restaurant, information about when the parking meters are enforced, or locations of publicly accessible bathrooms. Ambassadors may also have maps and promotional material available to provide to visitors.

An ambassador program tied to the “Make it. In the mountains.” campaign in Western Maryland could focus less on local residents and more on visitor interactions. Engaging in face-to-face conversations with visitors could complement the marketing and advertising campaign and other steps used to get visitors to seriously think about starting a business or working in Western Maryland.

⁸ See, for example, <https://www.charlottecentercity.org/initiatives/center-city-ambassador-program>, <https://www.downtownorlando.com/About/Downtown-Ambassadors>, https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/corridor-ambassador-program.html, and <https://www.morgantownwv.gov/658/City-Ambassadors>.

6. A REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

After this project concludes, the governments of Allegany and Garrett counties will be making a number of decisions as they begin the implementation process. The plan proposed here integrates the ideas described in this report and provides a checklist for the two county governments to use over the next two years.

6.1 July 2023 through June 2024

The first year should focus on making decisions as to the scope of the desired effort, including whether it should be expanded from a campaign to a program. Setting a realistic advertising budget is also essential at this early stage of the process. One year should also be sufficient time to begin implementing the marketing and advertising campaign.

1. **Decide on whether to integrate a relocation program.** As documented above in Section 5.2, broadening this campaign to include a relocation program would help generate a buzz and earned media—and hopefully expand the number of potential business owners and workers that are reached. It could also provide some small but meaningful incentives that would help people succeed after moving to Western Maryland. Developing such a program, however, would take time, and implementing such a program would take resources.
2. **Decide on whether to integrate an ambassador program.** An ambassador program, as described in Section 5.3, is another option for expanding from a marketing and advertising campaign to a broader program. As with a relocation program, an ambassador program would also take time to develop and resources to implement.
3. **Construct the landing page.** Section 4.1.1 includes recommendations for building out the landing page. Ideally, the landing page would not be constructed until after decisions are made about the relocation and ambassador programs; however, it could always be updated at a later time if decisions are pending.
4. **Collect additional visitor data, if needed.** To the extent that additional visitor count data are needed at specific state parks, state forests, or other destinations in order to tailor marketing and advertising most effectively to specific segments of visitors, data should be collected during this initial year.
5. **Create an advertising budget tied to specific segments of the visiting population.** The governments of Allegany and Garrett counties should coordinate advertising budgets and methods to target specific segments of the visiting population. While it is assumed that Allegany County funds would be used to target Allegany County visitors, and Garrett County funds would be used to target Garrett County visitors, coordination would be helpful.
6. **Begin implementing the marketing and advertising campaign.** Implementing the campaign will require in-house or contracted help. Specific tasks include:
 - o printing the brochure;
 - o deciding on which segments of the visiting population to target and which digital and traditional techniques to use to reach each segment;
 - o finalizing the digital ads, print ads, and billboards, as appropriate, targeted toward each segment;
 - o converting the two long-format videos delivered with this report to a series of 15-second and 30-second videos tailored to OTT platforms;
 - o implementing the digital ad campaign by placing the digital ads and OTT videos with desired geofencing; and
 - o implementing the traditional ad campaign by placing the print ads and billboards and distributing the brochures.

6.2 July 2024 through June 2025

The second year should focus on refining the campaign based on results seen so far. Also, should decisions be made to expand from a campaign to a program, it would be a realistic goal to implement the broader program in the second year.

7. **Assess results of the first year's marketing and advertising campaign.** A variety of outputs and outcomes should be assessed. Outputs include the number and type of digital and traditional advertisements placed. Also, standard types of data should be tracked for digital ads and OTT videos, including reach, clicks, and click-through ratio for different geographic areas. Statistics for the landing page should also be tracked, including not just page views, but also the number of contacts made with representatives from Allegany and Garrett counties. While these outputs are important, the desired outcomes are for people to move to Western Maryland to open businesses or to work. All prospects, whether successful or not, should be carefully tracked to help judge the success of the campaign.
8. **Refine and continue implementing the marketing and advertising campaign.** The campaign should continue through the second year—but refined based on the results from the first year and based on the available budget.
9. **Update the landing page.** Especially if it was decided to expand from a campaign to a program, the landing page will need to be updated.
10. **Implement the relocation program (if such a program is desired).** If the county governments decide to implement a relocation program in tandem with the marketing and advertising campaign, the goal should be to implement the program in the second year.
11. **Implement the ambassador program (if such a program is desired).** If the county governments decide to implement an ambassador program in tandem with the marketing and advertising campaign, the goal should be to implement the program in the second year.

While the plan identified here includes specific tasks and timelines, it is recognized that the timelines will depend on the governments of Allegany and Garrett counties success in reaching mutually agreeable decisions that allow a this two-county effort to succeed. The productive working relationships established by Steering Committee members and other local government, nonprofit, and business leaders during the Elevating the Outdoors project will be a helpful foundation.