

Tourism Update**April 26, 2012**

To: Chapel Hill Mayor and Town Council; Town Manager, Roger Stancil  
 From: Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau; Laurie Paolicelli, Director  
 Re: Quarterly Report from the Visitors Bureau

Below are top items to note on tourism/ and the town's partnership with the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau this past quarter/year.

**Town Funding To Visitors Bureau:**

**Annual Funding** to the Visitors Bureau: \$150,000

**Funding Source:** Town of Chapel Hill Hotel Occupancy Tax Revenues YTD: \$650,874 approximate

**Economic successes for the town this past quarter:**

At the Visitors Bureau you'll often hear the term "group business" (as opposed to individual, leisure or family business). The Bureau employs one FTE to specifically book *group* business, which is defined as a group of 10-200. Chapel Hill can comfortably house a conference of 150, but has had held groups up to 200. Major sources of group business for Chapel Hill today are: corporations, associations, government, education, medical and social, fraternal and wedding. Groups spend more, stay longer and use a greater amount of services. As you can see from the March 2012 group report below, the Bureau has succeeded in generating \$1.9 million from this sector, year to date. Based on the town's \$150,000 contribution that is \$13 return for every \$1.00 invested. We feel good about our growing success and potential here.

	<b>Current Month</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>	<b>Same Period Last Year</b>
Confirmed Bookings	4	39	36
Number of Delegates	605	5094	4624
Number of Room Nights	236	2918	2823
Estimated Spending	\$123,690.	<b>\$1,949,771.</b>	\$1,775,179.
Request for Information	210	1055	1620
Leads Generated	8	66	49

**Marketing Successes This Past Quarter:**

The 2012 Chapel Hill Visitors Guide arrived at the Visitors Bureau in early March. The Visitors Bureau spends approximately \$50,000 a year on Chapel Hill publications, including guides, maps and Chapel Hill walking brochures. Approximately 40,000 of the new guides will be redistributed through RDU, local hotels, state visitor centers. Restaurants, shops and University-related attractions report that visitors directly cite the Visitors Guide when making buying and touring decisions.

Communications staff hosted travel writer Lauren Piro with **Ladies Home Journal** who stayed at the Siena Hotel and wrote a feature story ON *WHY TO VISIT CHAPEL HILL*, in the May issue of the top selling magazine. Ladies' Home Journal reaches over 4.1 million women with each issue. The story on Chapel Hill promotes the town and area as a great travel destination, celebrating families, the arts and food.

### Website and Social Media Metrics

Electronically, a consumer newsletter on VISITOR happenings in Chapel Hill reaches more than 2,000 stakeholders monthly. For the month of March 2012, [www.visitchapelhill.org](http://www.visitchapelhill.org) sent 14,903 visitors to the Center which was a 1.65% increase over March 2011. Most visitors want hotels, restaurants, real estate information and related lifestyle data. Chapel Hill Facebook messaging reaches nearly **4,000 friends** every day. To date, **1511** tweets have been sent and **853** people are following the Visitor Bureau at [twitter.com/orangecountync](https://twitter.com/orangecountync)

### Challenges:

- Tourism numbers are up on weekends; although Chapel Hill still struggles with mid-week guests, thus reducing the number of tourism-related sales Sunday-Thursday at area restaurants and shops.
- Local residents—our chief ambassadors—are still unclear as to what to do with visiting friends and relatives. Many report taking them to Durham and Raleigh and not Chapel Hill because they fear parking and are unsure of what to do with visiting guests.
- Parking complaints revolve around the changing expiration times at lots and meters. There are no uniform provisions for expiration times: some are 5pm, some, 6pm and some 8pm.

### Future tourism programs that will impact town:

- This Visitors Bureau will launch “*Chapel Hill: The Edge of The Triangle*” a new branding program that will spotlight Chapel Hill’s “Mojo” and call attention to mid-week business travel opportunities.
- The Visitors Bureau will launch a “Chapel Hill: Be A tourist in Your Own Backyard” campaign, helping local citizens navigate the area and better understand where to take their visiting friends and relatives.
- Summer, “Welcome to Chapel Hill promotion” to campers’ parents.
- Future Special Event funding program to help grow area special events and their marketing reach to out-of-town guests.
- Mobile site: [www.visitchapelhill.mobi](http://www.visitchapelhill.mobi)
- New on-line program to spotlight arts: [www.explorechapelhill.arts.com](http://www.explorechapelhill.arts.com)

### Long range discussions:

Visitors Bureau Board and County have begun discussion on long-range location for the Visitors Bureau. In its infancy stage, discussion is rooted in continuing research that shows that visitor to the area struggles with finding the, Visitors Center on West Franklin Street; and parking at the current location at 501 W. Franklin Street. Possible 2013/14 relocation currently being discussed.

### Health of Hotel Industry

Hotel revenue is a key metric as to how Chapel Hill’s tourism industry is performing. Hotels are a major port of entry into the town; and visitors leave: 25 cents on the dollar at area hotels. The remaining expenditure is left at restaurants, shops, businesses. As of March 2012, hotel revenues in Orange County were up 7.5% at \$8.4 million, as compared to \$7.8 million this same time in 2011. March hotel occupancy was at 70% overall, up 10.8% from 2011.

Thank you.