

Director of Economic and Tourism Development

Southport

General:

This is a highly responsible management, developmental, administrative, and supervisory position that leads the design as well as implementation of a comprehensive program for economic and tourism development for the City of Southport. Economic development and tourism in Southport are heavily intertwined, since tourism is one of the largest employers in Brunswick County and the city, along with and associated with real estate, housing/construction, and service sector businesses in the city. However, it should be noted that the position will also support non-tourism related forms of economic and business development. The position requires a high degree of initiative and strong communications skills to build an economic and tourism plan that is grounded in local convictions, and generates the resources and will to remain sustained throughout its implementation and into the future. The position is both developmental and operational, helping to both create and plan and then ensure its effective follow-through. The position reports to the City Manager, but also works in concert with the Tourism Development Authority and policy leadership provided by the Board of Aldermen.

Essential Functions:

- Serves as both Economic and Tourism Development Director for Southport
- Develops and implements a comprehensive Economic/Tourism Development Plan for Southport, securing organizational commitment for the plan from the City Manager, Tourism Development Authority (TDA) and Board of Alderman of Southport. Coordinate closely with the Town of Oak Island and Brunswick County as a whole.
- To develop the Plan, engages a wide participation of public and private sector stakeholders in a multi-step assessment and planning process.¹ Furthermore, based on the approved plan:
- Continues to serve as focal contact point to facilitate stakeholder interests related to economic and tourism development
- Implements integrated marketing, advertising, media, and public relations strategy to promote Southport, identifying tourist demand, monitor competition, and establish needed products in coordination with professional firm(s).
- Takes initiatives and provides services help attract and diversify the business base functioning within Southport, keeping in mind both local residents' and visitors' needs. This will include counseling of business start-ups and providing them needed assistance and referrals for meeting local requirements, and accessing resources.

¹ / Note: Key stakeholders will include: The Board of Alderman, City of Southport staff and volunteers, existing and prospective business entities in Southport, the Southport-Oak Island and Country Chambers of Commerce, Downtown Southport, Inc., local environmentalists, the Southport Historical society, Economic Development Staff of Brunswick and New Hanover County, and interested citizens.

- Takes initiative and helps secure resources to improve the physical plant, beautification, and streetscape of the City, making it more attractive, walkable, and user-friendly for both tourists and residents.
- Takes initiative to attract or establish or more longer-term anchor attractions to Southport and the surrounding area such as: a recreational port, multi-month film or music festival, and an environmental education and/or eco-tourism center.
- Seeks financial and technical resources needed to implement the Plan. This will include research of grant opportunities, and development and promotion of proposals to private and public funders at local, state, and federal levels.
- Assesses advocates and supports needed changes to Plan implementation based on changing needs and opportunities over the course of the life of the Plan, working closely with the City Manager, TDA and Board.
- Develops and manages annual tourism department budget, reviews and authorizes all expenditures, analyzes variances and makes adjustments as needed. Prepares regular and special reports.
- Represents the city in local, regional, and statewide promotional efforts, recommends initiatives; fosters intra-governmental business, media and public awareness of local economic and tourism issues affecting Southport; coordinates efforts with other municipal and county entities.
- Maintains, strengthens professional and technical knowledge by attending industry conferences, reviewing professional publications, establishing professional networks and participating in tourism and economic development conferences.
- Provides oversight of the volunteer program at the Visitor Center, assigning and monitoring work product and assessing effectiveness.
- Provides ongoing implementation support of annual festivals, celebrations and other events supported by the City, DSI, local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Other duties and responsibilities as designated by the City Manager

Qualifications

- This is a frontline position for providing excellent customer service to members of the business community, both existing businesses and start-ups, non-profits active in the City, city employees and volunteers, and the general public. Contact will occur with all these parties both in person, phone, and electronic contact. The applicant must have a strong customer service orientation and a high level of communications and group process skills. The position also supervises a group of approximately 10 volunteers active in the Visitor Center.
- Education and Experience: Bachelors Degree /equivalent education and training in fields such as economics, communications, marketing, business administration, community development, or equivalent experience.

- 3- 5 years experience in planning/program development and implementation experience with proven results
- Demonstrated accomplishments in leading and guiding programs that transition and develop communities, especially related to their economic, infrastructure, and/or tourism development
- Demonstrated accomplishments in securing grant and contract resources from federal, state, and private sources to implement development plans. Strong proposal writing skills.
- Strong capacities in strategic planning and decision-making, with demonstrated capacity to generate wide support and buy-in for local change
- Sensitivity to local history and culture of communities, and ability to foster change aligned with the best assets of local environments
- Ability to make effective and persuasive public speeches and presentations on complex and controversial topics to top management, public groups, authorities, boards
- Ability to respond effectively to the most sensitive inquiries or complaints
- Ability to manage vendors, such as advertising agency vendors
- Ability to assimilate and analyze information from a variety of sources, and recommend courses of action and alternatives
- Ability to plan, organize, and effectively present ideas, concepts, and alternatives to diverse audiences.
- Knowledge of economic and tourism development policies, programs, and organizations