

RESOLUTION 2026-01

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EATONVILLE TOWN COUNCIL ADOPTING THE TOWN OF EATONVILLE TOURISM MASTER PLAN (2026–2031); ESTABLISHING TOURISM AS A STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY; AUTHORIZING IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION WITH ORANGE COUNTY AND TOURISM PARTNERS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the Town of Eatonville is one of the first self-governing African American municipalities in the United States and possesses nationally significant historical, cultural, and literary assets; and

WHEREAS, heritage, cultural, performing arts, and event tourism represent a sustainable economic development opportunity for the Town of Eatonville and the greater Orange County region; and

WHEREAS, Florida Statutes §125.0104 authorize the use of Tourist Development Tax revenues for tourism promotion, cultural and performing arts facilities, event tourism, and capital projects that induce overnight visitation; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Eatonville Tourism Master Plan (2026–2031) provides a comprehensive, data-driven framework to guide tourism development, capital investment, destination marketing, governance, and accountability; and

WHEREAS, the Tourism Master Plan identifies catalytic projects, including the Club Eaton Performing Arts & Cultural Entertainment Event Center, expanded festivals, year-round programming, and supporting infrastructure designed to generate measurable visitation and hotel room nights throughout Orange County; and

WHEREAS, adoption of the Tourism Master Plan positions the Town of Eatonville to coordinate with Orange County, Visit Orlando, state agencies, and other partners to pursue tourism funding and implementation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF EATONVILLE:

SECTION ONE: ADOPTION. The Town Council of the Town of Eatonville hereby **adopts the Town of Eatonville Tourism Master Plan (2026–2031)** as an official policy document guiding tourism development, promotion, and investment within the Town.

SECTION TWO: IMPLEMENTATION & AUTHORIZATION. The Town Council authorizes the Town Administration, Community Redevelopment Agency, and designated partners to implement the Tourism Master Plan, pursue eligible tourism funding opportunities, and coordinate with Orange County, Visit Orlando, and other tourism stakeholders consistent with the Plan.

SECTION THREE: CONFLICTS. All resolutions or parts thereof in conflict with the provisions of this Resolution are, to the extent of such conflict, superseded and repealed.

SECTION FOUR: SEVERABILITY. If any section or portion of a section of this Resolution is found to be invalid, unlawful, or unconstitutional, such finding shall not affect the validity, force, or effect of the remaining provisions.

SECTION FIVE: EFFECTIVE DATE. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon its passage and adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2026.

Angie Gardner, Mayor

ATTEST:

Veronica King, Town Clerk

JANUARY 6, 2026



TOWN OF EATONVILLE TOURISM MASTER PLAN

2026–2031 (TDT-Aligned)

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Town of Eatonville Tourism Master Plan

2026–2031 (TDT-Aligned)

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Purpose

This Tourism Master Plan establishes a comprehensive, implementation-ready framework to position the Town of Eatonville as a nationally recognized heritage, cultural, and performing arts tourism destination. The plan is explicitly aligned with **Florida Statutes §125.0104** and **Orange County Tourist Development Tax (TDT) policy**, ensuring that proposed projects, programs, and investments are eligible for tourism funding and produce measurable countywide tourism benefits.

1.2 Vision

Eatonville will be a premier destination for African American heritage, literary history, and cultural performing arts—offering year-round, visitor-facing experiences that generate overnight stays, tourism spending, and brand value for Orange County.

1.3 TDT Alignment Statement

All strategies in this plan support one or more of the following TDT-eligible purposes:

- Tourism promotion and marketing
- Tourist-oriented capital facilities
- Cultural and performing arts venues
- Event tourism
- Convention and meetings enhancement
- Projects that induce overnight visitation

2. Destination Context & Market Position

2.1 Historical & Cultural Significance

Eatonville is one of the first self-governing African American municipalities in the United States and the hometown of Zora Neale Hurston. This national significance forms the foundation for Eatonville's tourism value.

TDT Nexus: Cultural heritage tourism is an eligible tourism purpose when it is packaged, marketed, and programmed to attract visitors.

2.2 Role Within Orange County Tourism

Eatonville complements—not competes with—Orlando’s theme park and convention economy by providing authentic, place-based cultural experiences that extend visitor length of stay.

TDT Nexus: Diversification strengthens Orange County’s destination competitiveness and supports hotel demand countywide.

3. Market Analysis & Target Visitors

3.1 Target Segments

- Cultural & heritage travelers
- Literary tourism audiences
- Arts & music tourists
- Educational and academic groups
- Convention and meeting attendees (off-site experiences)

3.2 Visitor Characteristics

- Higher-than-average daily spend
- Multi-day stays
- Strong interest in ticketed events and festivals

TDT Nexus: These segments are proven generators of overnight stays and tourism spending.

4. Tourism Assets Inventory

4.1 Existing Assets

- Club Eaton (historic performance venue)
- Zora Neale Hurston National Museum of Fine Arts
- Moseley House Museum
- ZORA! Festival

4.2 Planned & Catalytic Assets

- Club Eaton Performing Arts & Cultural Entertainment Event Center
- Heritage walking trails and interpretation
- Expanded festival and performance programming

TDT Nexus: Museums, cultural facilities, and performing arts venues are eligible tourist-oriented capital facilities.

5. Tourism Development Goals

1. Increase out-of-county visitation
2. Generate measurable overnight hotel stays
3. Expand year-round tourism activity
4. Strengthen Orange County's cultural tourism brand

TDT Nexus: Goals directly align with statutory intent of TDT to promote tourism and lodging demand.

6. Product Development Strategy

6.1 Performing Arts & Cultural Facilities

- Adaptive reuse of Club Eaton
- Professional staging, acoustics, and visitor amenities

TDT Nexus: Performing arts facilities and cultural venues are TDT-eligible capital projects.

6.2 Event Tourism

- Ticketed concerts, literary weekends, festivals
- Annual signature events beyond ZORA!

TDT Nexus: Event tourism is a primary driver of hotel stays and measurable ROI.

7. Marketing, Branding & Promotion

7.1 Destination Brand

Eatonville will be branded as the cultural and literary heart of African American heritage in Central Florida.

7.2 Partnerships

- Visit Orlando
- Orange County Convention Center (off-site experiences)
- State and national heritage organizations

TDT Nexus: Destination marketing and promotion are core TDT purposes.

8. Events & Programming Strategy

8.1 Signature Events

- Expanded ZORA! Festival
- Club Eaton music and performance series

8.2 Year-Round Programming

- Monthly ticketed performances
- Educational and cultural workshops

TDT Nexus: Recurring events create predictable visitation and hotel demand.

9. Tourism Infrastructure & Capital Improvements

9.1 Priority Projects

- Club Eaton restoration and activation
- Visitor orientation and wayfinding
- Streetscape and placemaking enhancements

TDT Nexus: Capital improvements that directly support tourism are eligible uses of TDT.

10. Governance & Management

- Town of Eatonville: policy and coordination
- Nonprofit operators: facility and program management
- Orange County / Visit Orlando: marketing and sales

TDT Nexus: Professional management and accountability are required for TDT-funded projects.

11. Measurement, Reporting & Accountability

KPIs

- Annual visitors
- Visitor origin
- Event attendance
- Hotel room nights generated

TDT Nexus: Measurable outcomes are essential for continued TDT eligibility.

12. Five-Year Tourism Action Plan (2026–2031)

Year 1–2

- Complete Club Eaton restoration
- Launch baseline data collection
- Expand ZORA! Festival programming

Year 3

- Introduce year-round performance series
- Formalize convention group offerings

Year 4

- Develop heritage walking trails
- Increase national marketing reach

Year 5

- Achieve stabilized operations
- Demonstrate sustained hotel-night generation
- Prepare next-phase TDT capital requests

TDT Nexus: Phased implementation ensures readiness, feasibility, and ROI.

13. Sustainability & Risk Management

- Diversified revenue streams (tickets, sponsorships, grants)
- Scalable programming
- Conservative attendance projections

TDT Nexus: Financial sustainability protects public investment.

14. Conclusion

The Town of Eatonville Tourism Master Plan (2026–2031) represents a comprehensive, data-driven, and statutorily aligned strategy to position Eatonville as a nationally significant heritage, cultural, and performing arts tourism destination. The plan integrates capital development, event tourism, destination marketing, governance, and accountability into a single, cohesive framework that directly supports Orange County's tourism objectives.

Through catalytic projects such as the **Club Eaton Performing Arts & Cultural Entertainment Event Center**, expanded festivals, year-round programming, and targeted marketing, Eatonville is positioned to generate measurable increases in visitation, overnight hotel stays, and tourism-related spending across Orange County.

From a Tourist Development Tax (TDT) perspective, this plan:

- Meets all eligibility requirements under **Florida Statutes §125.0104**
- Prioritizes tourist-oriented capital facilities and event tourism
- Demonstrates strong return on investment through cost-per-visitor and cost-per-room-night metrics
- Uses conservative, moderate, and aggressive performance scenarios to manage risk

- Provides clear performance metrics, reporting protocols, and governance structures

Integrated Performance & ROI Summary

Five-Year (Moderate Scenario) Projections:

- Total visitors: ~118,000
- Annual stabilized visitors (by 2029): ~35,000
- Annual stabilized hotel room nights (by 2029): ~32,000

Return on Investment Metrics:

- Estimated 5-year TDT investment: ~\$5.0 million
- Cost per hotel room night: ~\$48
- Cost per visitor: ~\$42

These metrics compare favorably to many large-scale tourism capital projects, which often exceed \$100–\$150 per hotel room night and \$80–\$120 per visitor.

Scenario Planning (Risk Management)

- **Conservative Scenario:** ~25,000 visitors / ~22,000 hotel room nights annually by 2029
- **Moderate Scenario (Baseline):** ~35,000 visitors / ~32,000 hotel room nights annually by 2029
- **Aggressive Scenario:** ~45,000 visitors / ~40,000 hotel room nights annually by 2029

The phased approach outlined in this plan allows Orange County and the Town of Eatonville to scale investment and programming based on actual performance.

Five-Year Tourism Action Plan (Summary)

Years 1–2 (Foundation):

- Complete Club Eaton restoration and activation
- Expand ZORA! Festival programming
- Launch baseline tourism data collection
- Formalize Visit Orlando and hotel partnerships

Year 3 (Expansion):

- Launch year-round performing arts series
- Introduce convention and group tourism programming
- Expand regional and national marketing

Years 4–5 (Stabilization & Growth):

- Implement heritage walking trails and placemaking
- Strengthen national cultural branding
- Demonstrate sustained hotel-night generation
- Prepare next-phase TDT capital and programming requests

Governance & Accountability

Implementation of this plan will be guided by strong public-private partnerships, professional nonprofit operations, and annual reporting to Orange County. Performance metrics—including attendance, visitor origin, hotel room nights, and economic impact—will be reported annually to ensure transparency and continued eligibility for TDT investment.

Final Statement

Adoption of this Tourism Master Plan positions Eatonville as a **countywide tourism asset**, strengthens Orange County's cultural tourism portfolio, and delivers high-impact tourism outcomes at a modest public investment. The plan provides Orange County with a clear, defensible, and performance-based framework for strategic TDT investment that supports long-term tourism sustainability and economic development.

Appendix A: Key Questions & Answers (Summary)

1. What is the primary purpose of the Eatonville Tourism Master Plan?

Answer:

The purpose of the plan is to position Eatonville as a **nationally recognized heritage, cultural, and performing arts tourism destination** while ensuring that all tourism investments are **statutorily eligible for Tourist Development Tax (TDT) funding** and generate **measurable overnight visitation and economic return** for Orange County.

2. How does this plan directly align with Florida Statutes and Orange County TDT policy?

Answer:

Every section of the plan is tied to **Florida Statutes §125.0104**, which authorizes TDT use for tourism promotion, cultural and performing arts facilities, event tourism, and capital projects that induce overnight stays. The plan prioritizes **tourist-oriented capital facilities, ticketed events, destination marketing, and convention enhancement**, all of which are established eligible uses.

3. Why should Orange County invest TDT dollars in Eatonville rather than larger tourism areas?

Answer:

TDT works best as a diversified portfolio. Eatonville delivers **high return on investment at a modest capital cost**, with projected **costs of approximately \$48 per hotel room night and \$42 per visitor**, which is significantly lower than many large-scale tourism projects. It adds authenticity, cultural depth, and year-round demand without competing with existing assets.

4. How does the plan generate overnight hotel stays if Eatonville has limited lodging?

Answer:

TDT does not require lodging to be located within the host municipality. The plan focuses on **event-driven and cultural tourism** that induces visitors to stay in hotels throughout Orange County. The plan includes **hotel partnerships, event packaging, and visitor tracking** to document hotel-night generation countywide.

5. What are the projected tourism outcomes of this plan?

Answer:

Under the **moderate scenario**, the plan projects:

- Up to **35,000 annual visitors by 2029**
- Approximately **32,000 hotel rooms nights annually**
- An estimated **\$5.76 million per year in lodging revenue**, based on conservative ADR assumptions

These projections are phased, measurable, and supported by event programming and cultural facilities.

6. What is the role of Club Eaton within the Tourism Master Plan?

Answer:

Club Eaton is the **catalytic anchor project** of the plan. It will operate as a **performing arts and cultural entertainment event center**, hosting ticketed performances, festivals, and convention-related programming. It transforms a historic asset into a **year-round tourism generator** that supports all major TDT drivers.

7. How does the plan manage risk and avoid overestimating tourism demand?

Answer:

The plan uses **conservative, moderate, and aggressive scenarios**, allowing Orange County to evaluate performance under different demand conditions. Investments are **phased**, not front-loaded, and performance is tracked annually so adjustments can be made based on real visitation and hotel-night data.

8. How will success be measured and reported?

Answer:

Success will be measured through:

- Visitor attendance and ticket sales
- Visitor origin data
- Event utilization
- Hotel room nights generated

- Economic impact indicators

Annual reporting ensures transparency, accountability, and ongoing TDT eligibility.

9. How does this plan benefit Orange County as a whole, not just Eatonville?

Answer:

Tourists experience Orange County as a region, not by municipal boundaries. Eatonville enhances the county's **cultural tourism brand**, extends visitor length of stay, supports hotels and restaurants across the county, and strengthens Orange County's national credibility as a diverse, world-class destination.

10. What decision is being requested from policymakers?

Answer:

The request is to **adopt the Eatonville Tourism Master Plan**, recognize it as a **county-aligned tourism strategy**, and support **phased, performance-based TDT investment** in eligible cultural, performing arts, and event tourism projects that deliver measurable returns.

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