



Visit Elizabeth City Outlines Strategic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan

DEI experts from Melissa Majors Consulting guide Tourism Development Authority and local stakeholders in community-wide workshop

Elizabeth City, NC (Nov. 22, 2021) – Visit Elizabeth City officials alongside representatives from Melissa Majors Consulting (MMC), a diversity, equity and inclusion-focused firm, hosted a community-wide workshop Friday, Nov. 19. During the day-long session, 27 community leaders with diverse roles and backgrounds gathered to devise a 3-5-year prioritized plan and strategic solutions related to DEI in Elizabeth City. With the goal of making the community a more inclusive destination, the Tourism Development Authority began their work with MMC in August 2021.

Visit Elizabeth City's tourism marketing work generates \$70M annually, making it a prominent leader in the charge to make the destination more welcoming for locals and visitors alike. With specialization in ensuring all voices are heard and considered through collaborative community listening, and proven success in improving business outcomes through inclusive and innovative planning, MMC is a welcomed partner in the long-term, community-wide effort. MMC has previously partnered with organizations and destinations such as Visit Loudoun, Destinations International, Society for Human Resource Management and many more.

During the workshop, Majors, MMC CEO and a thought leader in education, inclusion and leadership strategies, accompanied by her associate Cass McMann, presented qualitative and quantitative DEI-related data gathered over a total of three weeks from 1,074 Elizabeth City citizens. Collected from stakeholder interviews, surveys and best practice studies, the data findings sparked discussions and inspired ideas among workshop attendees, culminating in a comprehensive DEI-focused actionable plan, which will be implemented over the next three to five years with the assistance and guidance of MMC.

"Our commitment to purposeful and action-driven investment in local Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives will continue to be paramount to the advancement of our community. This workshop, with the guidance of Melissa Majors and her fabulous team and insight, was a powerful next step in the community's ongoing pursuit to nurture a feeling of inclusivity for all in Elizabeth City," said Visit Elizabeth City Director, Corrina Ruffiex.

A main topic of discussion throughout the workshop was tactical empathy, or the importance of intellectual understanding of the concerns and positions behind a different viewpoint, as a basis for inclusive conversations and increasing belonging. Facilitators also reviewed immediate and long-term challenges related to DEI in tourism, specifically in community partnerships and engagement; brand perceptions about Elizabeth City related to being a welcoming destination for all; local stakeholders and potential visitors' sentiments about current events that may influence Visit Elizabeth City's mission and

strategy; commonalities that unify stakeholders across conflicting perspectives; trending feelings, beliefs and perspectives on priorities related to current events and the long term impact on tourism-driven economic development; and current feelings about and level of DEI awareness.

Elizabeth City Mayor, Bettie Parker attended and remarked, “Friday's workshop was awesome! The information, the participation, and the comradeship was second to none.”

“We, as a community, have lots of work to do, but it was incredibly refreshing to see everyone come together in [Friday's] workshop to share ideas about how we can do that work together, as one,” said Elizabeth City resident and owner of Montero's Restaurant, Andy Montero.

For more information about Visit Elizabeth City, visit www.visitelizabethcity.com.

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