

## Bureau seeks reserve funds for marketing

By [Josh McCann](#) | Independent Tribune

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Cabarrus - Tourism officials will seek to access reserve funds next month to help Cabarrus County's travel industry weather the national economic downturn.

Pending the approval of county commissioners, the Cabarrus County Convention & Visitors Bureau plans to spend:

- about \$150,000 to cover expected shortfalls in occupancy tax revenues during the next six months and
- about \$100,000 on nontraditional marketing methods to reach specific demographic groups.

President and CEO DeSales Wagster declined to provide many details about the new marketing effort, which she will share with area hoteliers at a conference Tuesday.

Wagster did say the new initiatives would be aimed at giving people with the ability to travel a reason to come to Cabarrus.

The plan would likely include packages involving the county's racing-related attractions, she said.

Keeping hotel rooms full is important for the local economy because visitors who stay here usually spend money elsewhere in the county, Wagster said.

"If we can get them to the hotel, then it's almost a slam dunk that we can get them to buy a meal or do some shopping or buy gas," Wagster said. "Then the magic begins to work throughout the community."

After getting feedback from the hotels, bureau officials expect to present the plan to county commissioners at a Nov. 3 work session.

The bureau had accumulated the reserves before becoming an independent nonprofit earlier this year, but the money remains under county control.

Tapping those funds is necessary, Wagster said, because area hotels are seeing less of several types of travelers as the economy has slowed.

Walk-in traffic has almost dried up, for example, and many businesses have put corporate travel on hold. In addition, the downturn has come at a particularly unfortunate time for the Cabarrus market because five new hotels are under construction.

People who are still traveling are generally doing so for a specific purpose and planning more carefully, Wagster said, so they must be targeted precisely.

Terry Crawford, chairman of the board that oversees the bureau, said Wagster and her staff can limit the effects of the economy's slide by taking action now.

"If we do the right things, we're going to shore up that deficit," said Crawford, who is also general manager of the Embassy Suites in Concord.

### Cabarrus Job Network launches

The bureau is among several area employers participating in an online network to connect with potential employees.

The Cabarrus Job Network resulted from a partnership between the Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Cabarrus Economic Development Corp. and a private funder.

To see participating employers and browse available jobs, visit [www.nationjob.com/cabarrus-north-carolina-jobs](http://www.nationjob.com/cabarrus-north-carolina-jobs).

A link is also available on the Chamber of Commerce's Web site, [www.cabarrus.biz](http://www.cabarrus.biz).

### Great Wolf opens offices

Great Wolf Resorts has opened temporary offices on Bruton Smith Boulevard while the company's resort and indoor water park is under construction.

Lisa Mitchell-Browning will be the facility's director of sales and Phillip Cunningham will be the general manager, according to bureau officials.

The 402-room resort is scheduled to open in March of 2009.

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