

From the Triad Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/triad/news/2015/09/15/national-folk-festival-draws-thousands-from-across.html>

National Folk Festival draws thousands from across the nation

Sep 15, 2015, 6:27am EDT

Though final numbers still are being tallied, city officials and organizers of the National Folk Festival say the weekend event brought an enormous crowd to downtown Greensboro and had a tremendous impact on the city.

Many downtown businesses had special hours to accommodate the crowd, and festival-goers — some from California, New York and Baltimore — stayed in area hotels, said Chris Wilson, Greensboro's assistant city manager.



JULIE KNIGHT

"There were people everywhere," he said. "It was downtown alive on

steroids times 100."

Wilson said he wouldn't be surprised if the crowd reached between 80,000 and 100,000 for the weekend. He was downtown Friday, Saturday and Sunday to help with the festivities and drove a cart to assist wheelchair-bound guests and others who could not easily get around. One group rented a downtown apartment for the weekend. Another group, from California, had only nice things to say about the city.

"It pumped me up to hear a couple from California talk about how much they love Greensboro," Wilson said. "It was magic."

Attendees said Greensboro was a "wonderful backdrop to an incredible festival," said Eleanor Schaffner-Mosh, deputy director of ArtsGreensboro, which is co-producing the festival with the National Council for the Traditional Arts. Greensboro was selected to host the festival for a three-year stay through 2017.

"The festival-goers seemed to be delighted," she said. "There were smiles. There were people saying, 'Oh my gosh, I've never seen Greensboro like this.'"

Though the National Folk Festival will move on to another city in 2018, Schaffner-Mosh said a N.C. Folk Festival is planned. Other former host cities have created similar festivals and seen success, she said.

Wilson said he is excited for the next two years, and he expects the festival will show other events looking for a host city "what an awesome venue this is to do things."

"We've just had a really good run here lately," he said, mentioning the success of the Wyndham Championship and announcement that the Greensboro Science Center is teaming up with the "Tanked" TV series from Animal Planet. "This festival, to me, it was everything you'd want for Greensboro — all types of music, all walks of life. For three days everybody just had a good time together.

"People came from all over the nation to stay here," Wilson said. "They were looking for a good time, and we delivered. We really brought the A-game."

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