

Just how large did Salisbury's National Folk Festival get this year?

Kelly Powers, Salisbury Daily Times Published 9:25 a.m. ET Sept. 10, 2019 | Updated 2:52 p.m. ET Sept. 10, 2019

One Lower Eastern Shore community got quite the population spike over the weekend as the National Folk Festival took to the downtown streets.

Utilizing WiFi mesh networks and data science, the city estimates Salisbury's festival brought about 153,911 people out from Friday to Sunday — more than doubling last year's attendance of 63,000.

It's too early for the economic influence projection for the weekend, according to Mayor Jake Day, though last year it rang in at about \$20 million total impact for the area's economy, as well as about \$20,000 in bucket donations.

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The mayor did estimate the festival — and its roughly \$1.1 million cost — will likely break even, with much of the funding coming from grants, alongside the city, corporate sponsors and sales over the weekend.

Day did say, however, beverage tents were estimating roughly 3,000 beers per-tent, per-day, with Saturday considered two days, as the celebrations continued.

They even reportedly ran out at one point, needing to make another stop at a local distributor.

"Which is great," Day said with a laugh. "I'm pretty proud of my city. That good feeling on Sunday, closing out with no voice, in a crowd that was super into it — what it shows is the potential of this city."

Other areas affected positively can be seen in downtown business.

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Thousands listen to sounds of a band at the 2nd day of the National Folk Festival in Salisbury on Saturday, Sept. 7, 2019. (Photo: Todd Dudek photo)

The Brick Room had a record-setting weekend in bar sales and a record day on Saturday. Roadie Joe's Bar & Grill had a single-day record Saturday as well as a breakout weekend. Lurking Class skate shop downtown also had a record weekend.

"It was definitely the best weekend we've had in our six years of being open," said Roadie Joe's general manager Josh Elliott. "It was awesome seeing that many people downtown, and all the downtown businesses flourishing. We'd love to see more events like this.

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"It was fantastic," Elliott continued. "Great food, great music, great people."

Making the festival its opening weekend, Angello's Scoops told the mayor it saw roughly 2,200 cones and 2,200 bowls out the door during the celebrations.

The mayor expects next year's event to grow even bigger, but he said a repeat of this year's turnout would be plenty.

"But the responses, the reaction from the community is, you know, we want it," Day said. "What our community showed was that we know how to show up."

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