

WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

Monday, December 29, 2025

journalnow.com

5 STORIES THAT SHAPED 2025



ALLISON LEE ISLEY PHOTOS, JOURNAL

Winston-Salem police officers monitor Merschel Park on a May 24, 2025.

Tax bills, protests and 1 great race created headlines this year

JOHN DEEM AND JOHN HINTON
Staff writers

This was a year of protest in Forsyth County, as people filled the streets in No Kings rallies.

It was also a year of concern as parking rules changed in downtown Winston-Salem and violence escalated.

It was also a year of clarity, as a man behind bars was found to be innocent.

Here are the four stories that most shaped our community in the past year.

Where is downtown Winston-Salem headed?

The fate of Winston-Salem's downtown was much discussed in 2025. Topics such as parking, crime and perceptions about homelessness drove debate about the present and future of downtown Winston-Salem in 2025.

What happened?

Some downtown businesses complained that the city's new system requiring motorists to pay for curbside parking on their phones rather than



NASCAR Cup Series driver Chase Elliott celebrates after winning the Cook Out Clash on Feb. 3, 2025 at Bowman Gray Stadium in Winston-Salem.

Please see **STORIES**, Page A3

Trump's social media plan for tourists sparks concerns

Proposal raises concerns about free speech, international travel

SKYLER SWISHER
Orlando Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. — A Walt Disney World vacation could soon come with a new U.S. government mandate for the theme park-loving British and tourists from dozens of other countries: Hand over five years of social media history.

For President Donald Trump, the proposed policy is about protecting America's borders and enhancing security. But the travel industry worries stricter entry rules could deter well-heeled international

visitors from destinations like Orlando, one of the world's top tourism hotspots.

Though Florida is reporting record tourism, Canadian visitation dropped sharply in the wake of Trump's tariffs and threats to annex the country as the 51st state.

Now some in the travel industry fear the proposed social media mandate, announced this month, could further damage international visitation to the United States.

David Marriott recently visited Orlando from the U.K., calling it a "trip of a lifetime" for his three children. The family spent two weeks experiencing Florida's theme parks and coastlines.

Marriott said he wants to return to the United States in the future, but the social media policy gives him pause. He worries

posts criticizing Trump's handling of the pandemic or the Jan. 6 Capitol riots could lead to travel authorization being denied.

"Watching America under Trump, it feels like you can't have an opinion different to his," he said.

The Trump administration hasn't detailed exactly how the proposed social media screening would work or what content could disqualify someone from entering the United States.

The proposal, under a 60-day review, would expand the information that must be provided by tourists from visa-waiver countries, mostly in Europe, when completing their Electronic System for Travel Authorization form, or ESTA. The 42 countries on the visa-waiver list cover some of America's closest allies, including

Australia, France, Germany, Israel, Japan and the U.K.

Travelers would need to list social media accounts used within the past five years on their ESTA form, which is needed to visit for up to 90 days. The agency also intends to add new data fields, such as email addresses used within the past 10 years, addresses and phone numbers of immediate family members, and biometrics, such as a face or iris scan, fingerprints or DNA.

Debbie Churchill, who lives in the U.K., has been a regular visitor to Central Florida since the early 1990s. She joked she pities the bot handling the assignment of reviewing the mundane snapshots of her life on Facebook and Instagram.

Please see **TOURISTS**, Page A4

Seahawks close in on NFC's top seed with 27-10 win over Panthers, who now need to win next week to make playoffs

SPORTS, B1

Weather

A couple of showers
High 59 • Low 26
FORECAST • A8

Inside

Advice	B4	Puzzles	B5
Classifieds	B6	Sports	B1
Comics	B5	TV	B4
Opinion	A5		

