



2015 – Washington County
Tourism Product Development Resource Team Report
Georgia Department of Economic Development



Team Recommendations

September 28th-30th, 2015



Washington County Tourism Resource Team

September 28th – 30th, 2015

The Tourism Resource Team is a program of the Georgia Department of Economic Development's Tourism Product Development Office. The goal of the team is to bring a variety of viewpoints and expertise together to assist a community with ideas, sources and resources for new or expanded tourism products. The report includes recommendations on tourism product in the following areas: Historic Preservation, Heritage & Cultural Tourism, Downtown Development, The Arts, AgriTourism, Nature-Based Tourism, Lodging, Sandersville Elementary and Marketing. This report included a community exploration by the team on September 28th-30th, 2015

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Product Development

Tourism Product Development

Increasingly, tourism is often the preferred economic development strategy within a community, and it plays a significant role in most communities across the state. When included as a focus in a comprehensive economic development plan, tourism can play a major role in a local economy by infusing new money into the economy that generates jobs and spurs economic growth.

Special interest tourism such as nature based tourism and heritage tourism create opportunity for communities to identify, package and market their existing assets.

Communities throughout the state have substantial assets that need to be identified and incorporated into their overall economic development efforts. Increased tourism product can translate into local job creation and additional revenue in the form of property tax, bed tax and sales tax. The state ultimately benefits as well from additional revenues.

Limited resources means collaboration among various local groups and agencies is essential to enhancing and developing local tourism product. Additionally, when multiple state agencies work as Team Georgia collaboratively on tourism product development, Georgia wins and the visitor goes away with a unique experience.



Research: Current State of Tourism in Washington County



What is the current impact of tourism in Washington County?

- **\$23.9** million in direct tourism expenditures
- **\$850** thousand in State Tax
- **\$660** thousand in Local Tax
- **230** jobs
- **\$4.87** million in payroll



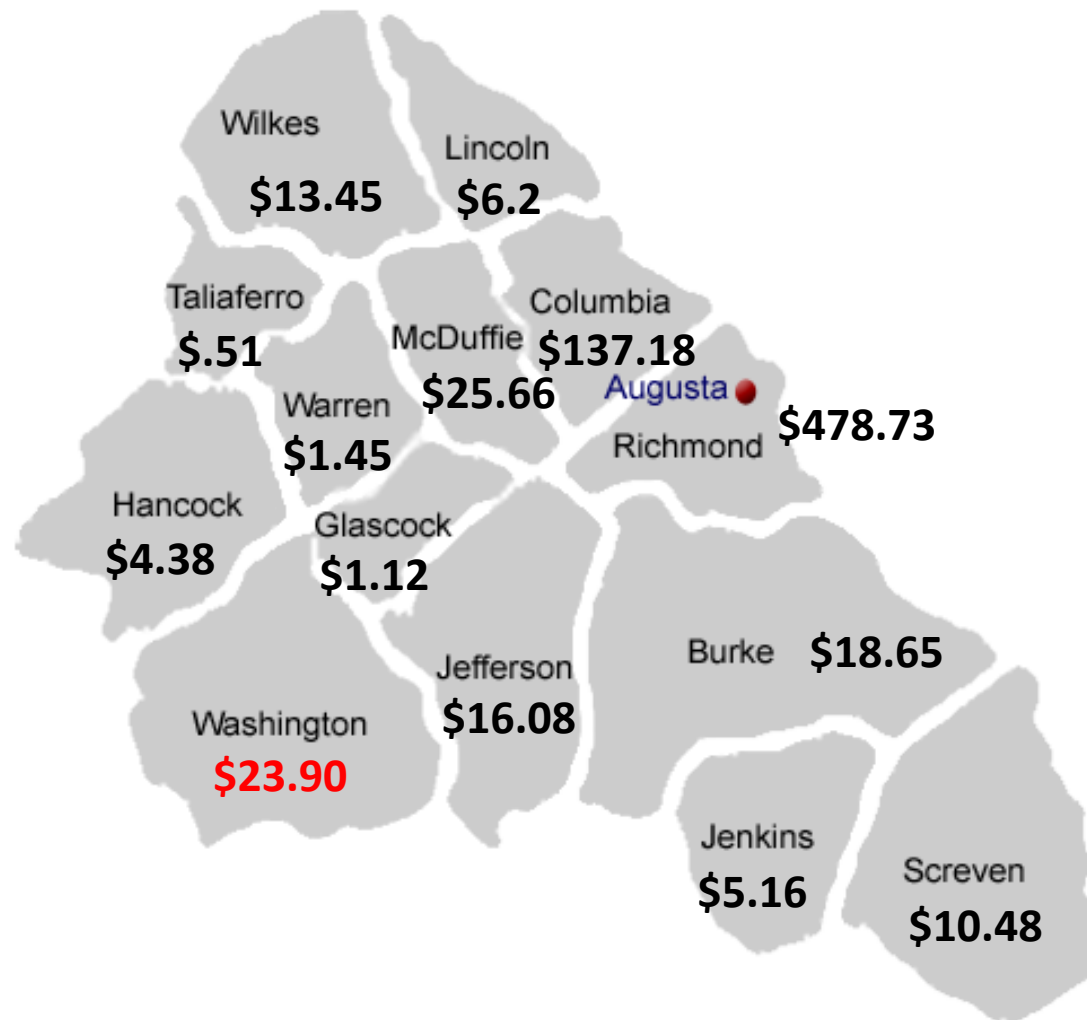
*Numbers represent calendar year 2013

United State Travel Association: Impact of Travel on Georgia Counties

10 Year Trend – Washington County

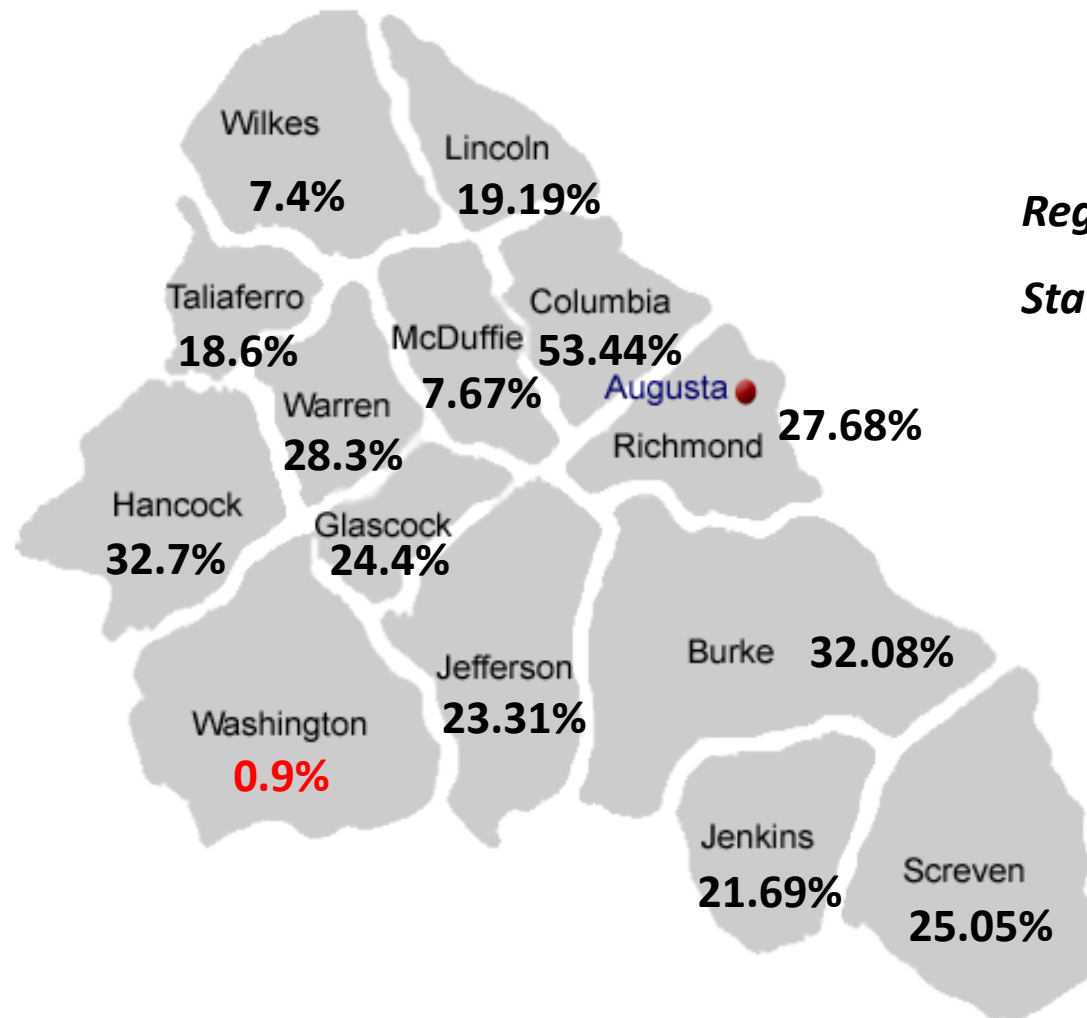
- **2003**
 - **\$23.68** million in direct tourism expenditures (2013 dollars)
 - **250** jobs
 - **2013**
 - **\$23.90** million in direct tourism expenditures
 - **230** jobs
- 0.9% increase over 10 years***

Regional Comparison – Region 7



2013 Tourism Impact in Millions

10 Year Tourism Trend – Region 7



Averages

Region 7 – 23.07%

Statewide – 27.28%

2003 – 2013 Percentage Change

**Adjusted for inflation to 2013 dollars*

Downtown Development



Downtown Development

Sandersville, Tennille & connecting the tiny towns... Davisboro, Deepstep, Harrison, Oconee, Riddleville, Warthen - Each has a unique story to tell!

Each Washington County community has its own history, built environment and people to celebrate what makes each of these towns unique. Use these steps to identify unique elements and action points for your community:

- Look at the core of each community with fresh eyes on a regular basis
- Take a walk through every part of downtown – look around, up and down!
- Find a key focus point
- Take lots of photos
- Discuss observations & photos at a Town Hall meeting.
- Create a new action plan
- Use the 4-Point Approach™ of successful Main Streets to create jobs and increase tax base:
 1. ORGANIZATION
 2. DESIGN
 3. PROMOTION
 4. ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING



Recommendation: Learn more about the Main Street 4-Point Approach:

<http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-approach>

Downtown Development

Engage the Community Stakeholders

The DDAs in Sandersville & Tennille should have regular meetings to engage citizens, property owners, businesses, city and county officials to brainstorm ideas that can revitalize Washington County's downtowns through reviewing the county comprehensive plan and future tourism plans.

Create an inventory of all of the downtown property (including vacant lots) which can be compiled in to a Real Estate portfolio of available sites for rent, sale or development. Put signs in the windows of those ready for occupancy:

***“THIS BUILDING IS NOT VACANT!
IT IS FULL OF OPPORTUNITY!
YOUR BUSINESS HERE!”***



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Links & Maps, Parking & Wayfinding Signage

Be sure that good maps are on all community web sites and links connect all of the communities. Discuss corridor management plans with the Regional Commission staff planners. Visitors could miss Tennille if they follow the signs for the overpass.

Downtown Sandersville has confusion traffic patterns for motorists and pedestrians to follow around the square - especially on West Haynes St. Talk to DOT, but also do your own "recon" to determine best flow for downtown around the square. Do a parking survey and then encourage merchants and employees to park in off street parking areas.

Brainstorm with the judges and courthouse officials to plan off street parking options possibly at nearby churches. Information and maps of available parking could be sent with jury info and to court staff for busy court days to allow for more turn over of downtown parking spaces when court is in session.

Consider a new look for downtown street signs: Incorporate your local history by utilizing the unique Georgia History Plate Collection as a base design for signage (see example to right).



Downtown

Vacant Upper floors and Vacant Land

Identify & use upper story floors for residential loft apartments. Upscale lofts would provide income for property owners and help to support existing businesses and create a lively twenty-four hour downtown.

Unique apartments could be added to the old medical building next to city hall.

A small inn/motel could be built on the large vacant lot between E. Haynes and Gilmore St. Having a hotel in close proximity to the downtown would stimulate redevelopment of the area including the freight depot, Coca Cola Building and the Ice House. Also this could encourage more dining options, services & retail within the area. The building to the right of city hall could be renovated into a hotel or inn.



Downtown

New Downtown Green Space

Families and empty nesters living in the downtown area as well as shoppers and visitors would appreciate a nearby green space oasis.

Build a small terraced seating area – a mini amphitheater (low maintenance) - into the back corner of the new park rather than adding another gazebo. Add a simple, triangle sail-like retractable canopy for shade. Adding picnic space options would encourage this space to become more of a gathering venue.

Having a side access thru a “speakeasy door” to the Pringle building’s event space upstairs would help encourage small weddings and receptions to be held there.



Downtown

Downtown Trees

Contact Carmine Fischetti(carmine.fischetti@dca.ga.gov) with the Department of Community Affairs' Office of Downtown Development Design Office with regards to trimming trees along Sandersville's city streets.

There are different pruning standards for establishing the future structure for how Live Oaks will look in the future. Check out the following conference: "Building Our Best Cities: Envisioning a Connected Urban Forest" - <http://www.gufc.org/>



Example of Live Oak located along sidewalk



Downtown Development

Downtown Outdoor Visitor Center

The downtown Sandersville police post offers a unique opportunity to provide 24/7 information to visitors and residents in a central location.

The average daily traffic count driving by this location in Downtown Sandersville is 10,800 cars in 2014.

Recommendation: Convert the downtown police post into an indoor / outdoor Visitor Information Center with information accessible to visitors 24/7.

Consider unique signage from local artists to draw the eye of visitors to the building and encourage them to visit.



Downtown Development

Washington County Plate Pursuit

A fun and unique way to get visitors exploring your towns and looking up, down, and around the different historic structures throughout your county is a themed hide and seek.

The most iconic representation of Washington County is the Transylvania Club Historical Plates. A local or regional artist can recreate the plates in bronze or stainless steel; these plate statues can be hidden around the historic downtown, at attractions and other places of interest around the county.

Produce promotional materials with hints and offer a prize to any visitor who can successfully find all the hidden plates throughout the county. Greenville, SC successfully built this concept and even created a children's book to accompany it.

Examples:

Hunt the Lost Quail in Thomasville:

<http://goo.gl/BC79Tp>

Greenville SC's Mice on Main:

<http://www.miceonmain.com/>



Downtown Development

Stories of the Downtown Buildings

Recommendation: Each historic downtown building holds a unique story of the people, businesses and life of your city. Each city could tell these stories through simple interpretive signs on each building accompanied by a walking brochure and map. Several downtown tours throughout the county could be combined into a county-wide historical driving tour.

Example: Dahlonega Stories Tour:

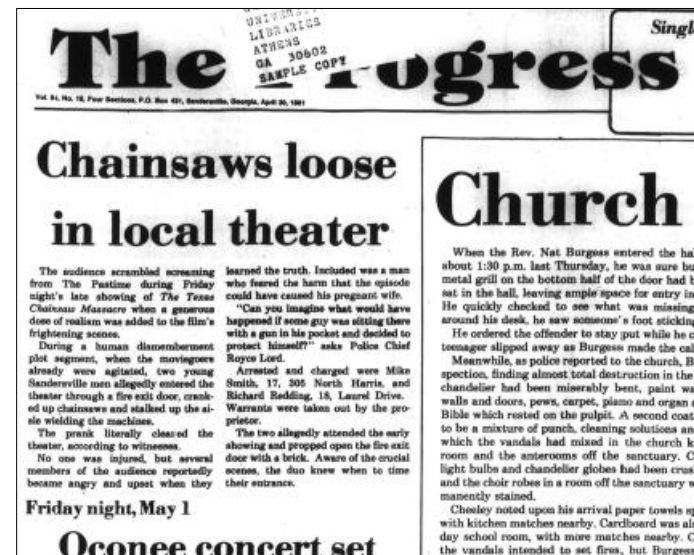
<http://dahlonega.org/historic-downtown-4/dahlonega-stories-tour>

Example: Americus Historic Walking Tour:

<http://cdn.gadataengine.milesmedia.com/gadataengine/appmedia/brochures/0/973/DowntownWalkingTour.pdf>



Dahlonega's Stories Tour



One of Sandersville's great stories

Downtown Development

Advertising Murals

Sandersville and some of the other cities in Washington County have advertising signs that are fading away. Some are still in good shape, but some are almost gone.

Recommendation: All cities should investigate refreshing these signs. The vintage ads reinforce the historic small town feel of each community.

Communities could also research to find out if there were other advertising murals in the towns that have faded away that would be recreated. If there are enough murals, they could comprise a trail though the county.



Downtown Development

Public Restrooms

The first stop that a majority of travelers seek out after arriving to their destination is the restroom.

Consider these points:

- Does your community have public restrooms available to wary travelers 24/7? Or at least during daylight hours?
- Are the restrooms located in Downtown Sandersville easily accessible to visitors and signed properly?
 - The current signage for restrooms in downtown Sandersville points visitors towards a grassy lawn.

Recommendation: Consider new or redirected signage that more clearly indicates the location and pathway to public restrooms in downtown Sandersville.



Downtown Development

DCA - Georgia Main Street & Regional Community Services

Community Services Region 7

Tina Hutchenson / tina.hutchenson@dca.ga.gov

Georgia Main Street

<https://www.youtube.com/user/gamainst>

Including Top 10 Techno Tools for downtown
Main Street 101 Training - June 21 & Aug 21

DCA Main Street Design Studio

For more information relating to financial incentives for
downtown businesses, please check out the **Economic
Development Finance Program Packet** at:

<http://www.dca.ga.gov/economic/TaxCredits/programs/downloads/EDFD.pdf>



The Arts



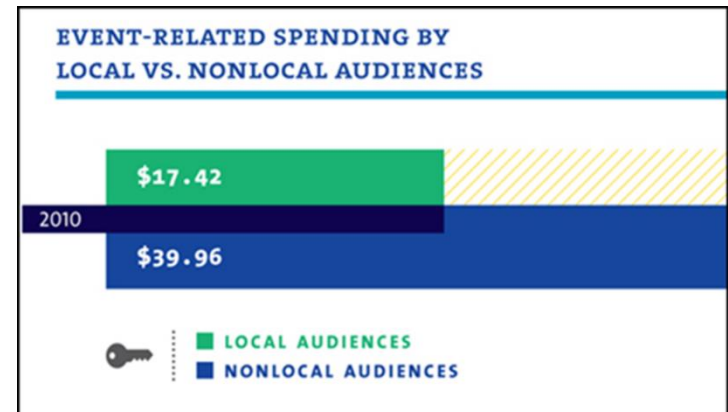
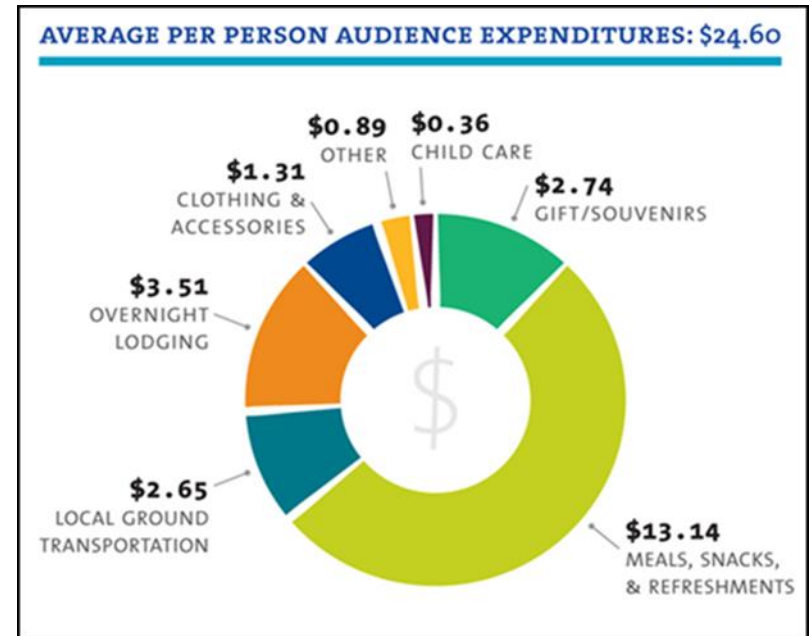
ARTS

What are “the arts”?

Any form of creative expression, from classical forms such as the ballet and opera, to crafts such as quilting, to contemporary forms, such as hip-hop.

Why are the arts important to tourism?

- Art can be a problem solver
- Art can bring people in a community together
- Art attracts cultural heritage tourists, who spend more money than other tourists
- Art can help interpret local stories and history through painting, murals, theatre, music, storytelling, etc.
- Art can help brand your town with a look, a logo, a sound, an image that is unique
- Art can help make a community vibrant and alive, a place where people want to live and visit



ARTS

Georgia Plates

The story of the Georgia plates and the Transylvania Club is very interesting, but there is currently not a place where tourists can go to learn the story and see all of the plates at eye-level with an unobstructed view.

Recommendation: Put together an exhibit where tourists can learn about this history of the plates and see each one along with its story. This could happen in a number of places- an empty storefront, the Brown House, the Transylvania Club, the Sandersville Elementary School, etc. Develop a new plate series featuring GA Civil Rights icons.



ARTS

Public Art

The planned park in Sandersville will provide additional greenspace downtown. There are also many empty lots in the blocks surrounding downtown.

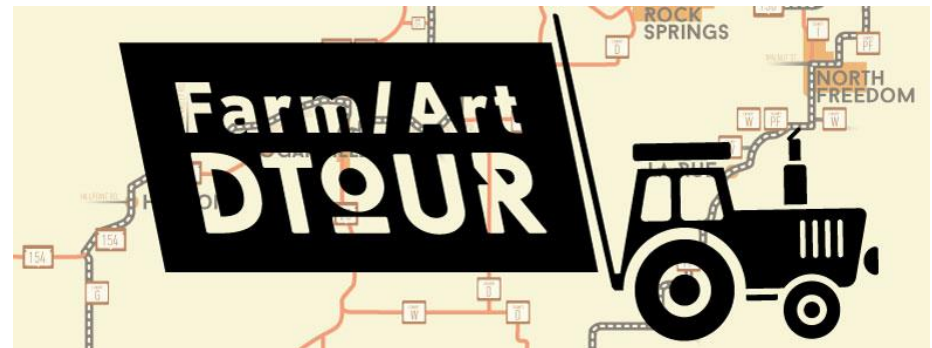
Recommendation: Consider public art for all of those spaces. Public artwork is a way to make your city unique and to brand your community. It also turns an empty lot into a destination, and encourages visitors to explore areas outside of the main square.

The artwork can be permanent, or it can change at different times of the year. The City of Suwanee offers their SculpTour, a tour of public artwork in the city that changes annually-

<http://www.suwanee.com/whatsnew.sculptour.php>

Public art is not exclusively for the city- The Farm/Art DTour is a 50-mile self-guided backroads tour through Sauk County, Wisconsin, a rural farming community. The annual sculpture event includes pasture performances and draws people to rural communities.

<http://fermentationfest.com/dtour>



ARTS

The Brown House

The Civil War art exhibit at the Brown House is a very unique way to interpret local history and stories. One issue with the exhibit, though, is that visitors who do not purchase the exhibit catalog will not know the stories that the paintings are communicating, which is a vital component to the exhibit.

Recommendation: The Team recommends that the Brown House explore other options to telling the stories so that ALL visitors have the opportunity to find out more about local history. Ideas include printing each story and posting it alongside each painting, loaning a copy of the catalog to visitors who can return it at the end of the tour, or securing copies of the catalogs in each room so that visitors can read them but not take them.



ARTS

Tennille

Tennille's downtown has a tremendous amount of potential, and local artists and crafters can help the community realize that potential.

Pop-up Shops

Some communities have used empty storefronts as an opportunity to offer pop-up shops. These are temporary shops that artists set up in vacant spaces. This is a way to draw people downtown, increase traffic to stores and restaurants, and bring attention to these great spaces. A great time to schedule pop-up shops would be the weeks before the holidays when people are looking for unique gifts.

- <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/pop-shop-every-artist>
- <http://artsandcrafts.about.com/od/openingastorefront/a/How-To-Open-An-Arts-And-Crafts-Retail-Pop-Up-Store.htm>
- <http://blog.thestorefront.com/how-to-set-up-a-pop-up-art-gallery-in-7-steps/>
- <http://www.torquayheraldexpress.co.uk/Artists-pop-shop-brightens-town/story-22841066-detail/story.html>

Artist Window Displays

Other communities have used the windows of empty spaces as canvases for colorful displays, which bring life to the buildings:

- <http://raleighemergingspaces.com/>
- <http://www.chicagonewcoop.org/what-to-do-with-an-empty-storefront-a-makeshift-art-gallery/>



ARTS

Tennille

Another option to make Tennille a vibrant community is to literally make it a vibrant, colorful community. Partner with local artists to brainstorm ways that color and paint could invigorate the downtown area. And don't forget the watertower, which is the perfect place to paint a bright invitation to guests to come and see what a great place Tennille is.



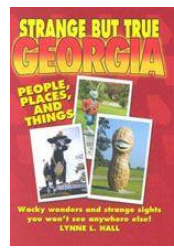
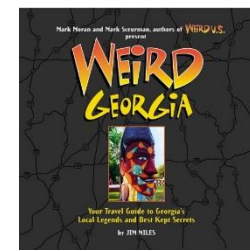
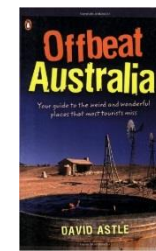
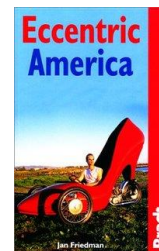
ARTS

Weird Washington

The communities in Washington County could put together a trail called Weird Washington, which would highlight all of the quirky, unusual sites. It could include, for instance:

- The pig monument
- Goat Town
- The tiny jail which housed Aaron Burr
- The Bulldog barn

A local graphic artist could help create a logo for the trail, and a small sign at each location would show the logo and tell the story of that place.



ARTS

Weird Washington continued

Because of the large number of visitors to the Bulldog Barn, a digital camera should be installed across the street on the existing power pole, so visitors can have their picture taken beside the barn sign.

For example, the City of Thomasville offers this option to visitors stopping by to see a 329 year old live oak. The 'Big Oak and Big Oak Cam' have become one of the show spots for the city. After a photo is taken it, shows up on a designated website for the Big Oak.

Thomasville Big Oak:

<http://www.thomasvillega.com/plogger/index.php>



ARTS

Sandersville Elementary School

It is wonderful that this building is still standing and has been made available to the local community. There are a lot of great ideas about how to utilize all of the space.

Recommendation: Because there is so much space and so many good ideas, the Team recommends that the trustees of the building bring in an outside consultant to help shape a plan for the space. The plan should prioritize the multiple components of the new facility and include a development plan for raising money for the initial projects.

These are a few things to keep in mind:

- The Fox Theatre Institute is a great resource for the theatre space- their experts can provide advice on making renovations to the space that do not jeopardize the historic elements of the building. They also manage Georgia Presenters, a group of small and mid-sized organizations that present theatre, dance and music performances.
- Be sure to hire an experienced exhibit designer/curator to consult on the creation of any exhibits.
- Consult with an experienced curator to determine whether or not you are going to collect items related to your exhibits. If so, then you will need to allocate climate-controlled space to store those items.



ARTS

Sandersville Elementary School

One idea for the SES is to use some of the classrooms for artist studios. There are many different models that could be used:

- Rent the studios as an income source
- Provide low-rent studios in exchange for artists agreeing to open their space for tourists at specific times each week
- Provide low-rent studios in exchange for artists working on community arts projects

The space could also be used for artist residencies. This would mean that artists would apply to use the space for a designated amount of time. Usually, residencies include a space to live as well as work. Residencies could be set up in different ways:

- Artists pay to use the space
- Artists may use the live/work space at no cost, but must contribute a certain number of hours to a community art project

The Alliance of Artist Communities can offer advice about different models for artist residencies-

<http://www.artistcommunities.org/>



ARTS

Inspiration

For ideas about how to use the arts for community development and tourism product, go to these websites:

National Endowment for the Arts Our Town:

- <http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/>

ArtPlace:

- <http://www.artplaceamerica.org/about/introduction>
- http://www.artplaceamerica.org/our-work/national-grants-program/grantees?search_api_views_fulltext=

Open House- Matthew Mazzotta:

- <https://vimeo.com/70386286>

Philadelphia Mural Arts Program:

- <http://www.muralarts.org/programs>



ARTS

Funders

Check with these potential funders for funds for arts projects:

- **Georgia Council for the Arts-** www.gaarts.org State arts council that provides multiple grant programs for arts projects
- **South Arts-** www.southarts.org Regional arts organization that provides grants to present theatre, music, dance or guest writers
- **Georgia Humanities-** www.georgiahumanities.org State humanities council that provides grants for humanities-based cultural and education programs such as history exhibits, lectures, walking tours, oral history projects, etc.
- **Fox Theatre Institute-** <http://foxtheatre.org/the-fox-theatre-institute/> FTI provides grants for the restoration of historic theatres
- **ArtPlace-** www.artplaceamerica.org National funder awarding large grants in creative placemaking projects where the arts play a central role in a community's planning and development strategies.
- **National Endowment for the Arts-** www.nea.gov National funder with multiple grant programs for arts projects. Rural communities should note two programs: Challenge America (\$10,000 to reach underserved audiences) and Our Town (up to \$200,000 for creative placemaking projects that are partnerships between arts organizations and local government)
- **National Endowment for the Humanities-** www.neh.gov National funder with multiple grant programs for humanities projects
- **Citizen's Institute on Rural Design-** <http://rural-design.org/> An annual competitive opportunity to host an intensive, two-and-a-half day community workshop for rural communities with design challenges
- **USDA-** www.usda.gov USDA Rural Development forges partnerships with rural communities, funding projects that bring housing, community facilities, business guarantees, utilities and other services to rural America.

Lodging



Lodging

Developing Unique Lodging

The 21st Century Traveler is looking for an experience with every element of a vacation or trip.

Visitors seek out interesting or themed lodging that offer more than the traditional hotel room.

Explore development of new lodging that celebrates the unique elements of the county culture and environment:

- Cabins overlooking the kaolin mines / water-filled mines
- Downtown loft lodging
- Train Car / Caboose Lodging

Additionally, consider specialty spaces for individuals and groups:

- Historic Jail
- Conestoga Wagons
- Yurts (upscale modern tent camping)



Lodging

Bed and Breakfast / Boutique Hotel

Bed and Breakfast

There is a clear lack of mid to high-end quality lodging available in Washington County for the leisure traveler. A bed and breakfast is a flexible option for a variety of travelers across different markets and generations. With several historic properties available for purchase across the county, a historic home can create a unique experience enough of itself.

Boutique Hotel

The Old Clinton Motel in Sandersville or several historic buildings in downtown Sandersville or Tennille are prime for boutique lodging and feasible for meeting the immediate market needs of mid-level hotel rooms in Washington County.

Examples:

- Motorcourt Renovation: Merry Acres Inn, Albany
<http://merryacres.com/>
- Boutique Hotel: Plains Inn, Plains
http://www.plainsgeorgia.com/Plains_Inn.htm



Lodging

Upgrades to Existing Lodging Inventory

Hotel rooms and public spaces are heavily used and require constant repairs and renovations to keep them in prime condition for visitors. The average American hotel property adheres to the following renovation cycle:

Refurbishment:

- Every 4-6 years
- Refurbishment of furniture, fixtures, equipment
- \$5,000 - \$8,000 per room

Basic Renovation:

- Every 12 Years
- Complete overhaul of rooms and guest areas
- \$20,000 per room

Complete renovation:

- Every 20 years
- Focuses on entire hotel including updating water pressure, soundproofing, fire safety and other important maintenance items
- \$50,000 - \$100,000 per room



Lodging

Upgrades to Existing Lodging Inventory

If small, independent property owners are unable to finance regular, large-scale renovations and refurbishments, the following basic upgrades are recommended to enhance visitor experience:

- High-speed, free internet
- Like-new, high-quality linens including sheets, pillows and towels
- Modern bedding without bedspreads (only duvets or blankets with double sheet) and no bedding sets with throw pillows
- Modern lighting with sufficient lamps for reading and proper lights in bathrooms
- Several available electrical plug-ins near the nightstand for visitor's modern electronic devices
- Modern television and small appliances (hair dryer, iron, board) in each room
- Regular intensive deep-cleanings of entire room including carpets, draperies, and all upholstery to remove odors, stains and allergens with no heavy scents



Lodging

Hotel Packages

Hotels catering to any market can create packages to entice visitors and encourage them to book additional nights during their stay. Consider the following sample packages:

- Hunters / Fishers Value Package
 - Basic Hotel
 - Space at hotel for securing storing hunting and fishing equipment / gun safe in hotel room
 - Cleaning space near designated hotel rooms for cleaning gear, clothes and other supplies
 - Partnership with local processing facility to store or process game caught during trip
 - Iced cooler for fisherman to store fish
- Date Night Packages
 - Dinner at local business / movie at theatre
 - Roses or gift with catered breakfast
- Special Event Packages
 - Hotel room booked with tickets to local event
 - Special gift themed around event



Lodging

Tax Credits and Funding

The following funding options could be used for lodging projects:

1. Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit <http://georgiashpo.org/incentives/tax>
2. State Preferential Property Tax Assessment for Rehabilitated Historic Properties
<http://georgiashpo.org/incentives/tax>
3. State Income Tax Credit for Rehabilitated Historic Property <http://georgiashpo.org/incentives/tax>
4. Department of Community Affairs' Downtown Development Revolving Loan Program
<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/economic/financing/programs/ddrlf.asp>
5. GA Cities Foundation Downtown Development Revolving Loan Program
<http://www.georgiacitiesfoundation.org/LoanFund.aspx>
6. For more information relating to financial incentives for businesses, please check out the Economic Development Finance Program Packet at:
<http://www.dca.ga.gov/economic/TaxCredits/programs/downloads/EDFD.pdf>
7. Tourism Product Development Resource Team Community Funding Request:
<http://www.marketgeorgia.org/article/new-for-2016-tourism-product-development-resource-team-community-funding>

Lodging

Georgia Hotel Lodging Association

GHLA is the state's non-partisan trade association representing the lodging industry. Originally founded in the 1907, its mission is to promote, protect and educate the lodging industry around the state and to ensure positive business growth for its members. The Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association is the voice of the lodging industry in Georgia. GHLA is the official state affiliate of the American Hotel & Lodging Association. Its membership includes the Atlanta Hotel Council, Buckhead Hotel Council, Perimeter Hotel Council, among others.

GHLA Member Benefits Include:

- Government & Legislative Representation
- Training & Education Resources
- Communication on the Latest Industry Trends
- Newsletter and Bulletins
- Partner Discount Programs
- Membership Meetings & Annual Convention
- National Affiliation with AHLA

<http://www.ghla.net/>



Recreation & Ecotourism



Recreation & Ecotourism

Kaolin Mines

Sandersville is known as the “Kaolin Capital of the World.” One of Georgia’s most important minerals, kaolin is a white, alumina-silicate clay used in hundreds of products ranging from paper to cosmetics to the nose cones of rockets.

Kaolin is also used in medicines, paints and many other products, all of which are shipped around the world. At the end of the 20th century, kaolin was an \$800 million business and Georgia's largest volume export. Mining companies have reclaimed and restored more than 80 percent of the land that has been stripped since 1969.

About 2.5 million tons of kaolin is shipped annually from Georgia's "white gold" belt in 13 counties along the fall line that girdles the mid-portion of the state.



Recreation & Ecotourism

Kaolin Mines

How can visitors currently experience the Kaolin mines of Washington County?

- Currently, the mines are only open to the public for tours during the Kaolin Festival

IF this is Washington County's most unique element, visitors **MUST** be able to **experience** it year round! While an exhibit in a museum, photos, or an audio tour is great for teaching about kaolin, today's savvy travelers (especially millennials) want to see, smell, touch, hear and fully experience a site – not just read about it.

“Seeing the sights is no longer enough, and there is a move from simply seeing to truly experiencing and making the event transformational by being absorbed in that experience.”

- Tim Peck



Recreation & Ecotourism

Kaolin Mines

Consider innovative methods of allowing visitors to see and experience the kaolin mines without actually entering the mine site:

- Scenic Overlook with interactive interpretation
 - Visitors can see the mines, read about them on signage, touch interactive displays, and even taste the kaolin
- Observation bridge / platform crossing a mine
 - Consider development of a bridge or observation platform to take visitors over the mine without the liability of walking within it
 - Example: Sawnee Mountain Preserve Observation Deck, Cumming (Boy Scout Project)
 - <http://www.sawneemountain.org/>
- Tours aboard an amphibious vehicle or monster truck
 - Example: Hog Waller Mud Bog in Palatka, Florida
 - <http://www.hogwallermudbog.com/>



Recreation & Ecotourism

Kaolin Mines

Zip lining across a mine / water-filled mine

- Allows visitors to see and experience the mine from a unique, action-packed perspective
- Example: Columbus Whitewater
 - <http://wex.arkturis.com/blue-heron-adventures/>



Columbus Whitewater, Columbus GA

Abandoned Mines and Filled Ponds

- Considering the large amount of property occupied by Kaolin Mines and filled ponds / lakes, develop a relationship with corporate owners to develop adaptive reuses of the property for recreation including:
 - Hiking / Walking Trails
 - ATV Trails
 - Natural Observation / Audubon Areas

Example: West Virginia's economy has suffered in recent years with the decline of the coal industry. Tourism officials have assisted in adapting land striped for coal mining into ATV trails. Example: <http://www.trailsheaven.com/>



Fat Daddy's ATV Park, Waycross GA

Recreation & Ecotourism

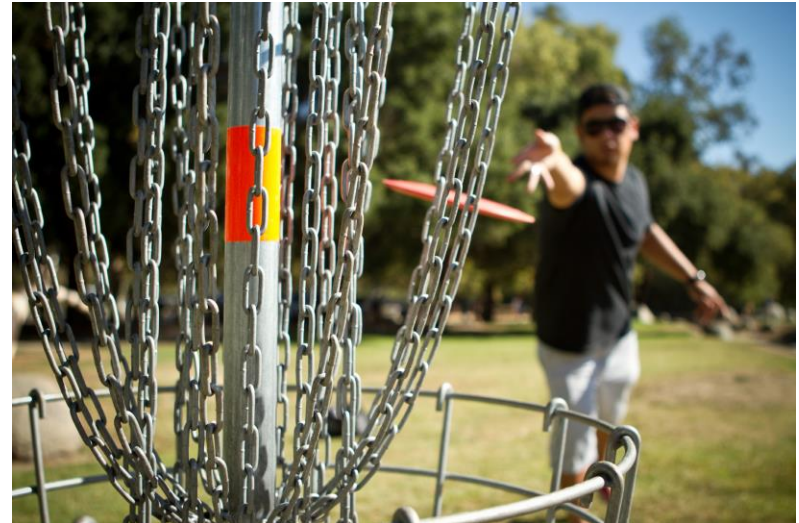
Community Sports and Recreation

Disc Golf

- Continue development of disc golf courses throughout community
 - Partner with International Disc Golf Center in Appling to host tournaments and events
 - Consider Development of a Disc Golf Championship Trail through Classic South
 - Partner with neighboring communities with disc golf to cross promote and share brochure, website and other costs
 - Encourage visitors to complete all courses in region and reward with prize

Youth Baseball and Softball

- Continue maintenance and encourage construction of new youth sports facilities to league and tournament standards
- Aggressively recruit youth tournaments and championships



Recreation & Ecotourism

Central Georgia Outdoors

“Central Georgia Outdoors is dedicated to promoting wildlife and outdoor recreation in Washington County, Georgia. Whether you are looking to go on a private guided hunt, join a hunting club, fish, enter outdoor sports competitions or more, we have it all! Conveniently located in the heart of Georgia, we are your outdoor recreation destination!”

Partners:

- Ocone Ridge: <http://oconeeridge.com/>
- Hartley Place Hunts: <http://www.huntinga.com/>
- Segars Sports: <http://www.segarssports.com/>
- Woods-N-Water: <http://www.woodsnwaterinc.com>

Recommendations:

- Continue local partnership and marketing co-op
- Work with GDEcD Director of International Business Development to expand the reach throughout Georgia's key international market
 - Tracy Vaughan
 - tvaughan@georgia.org



Recreation & Ecotourism

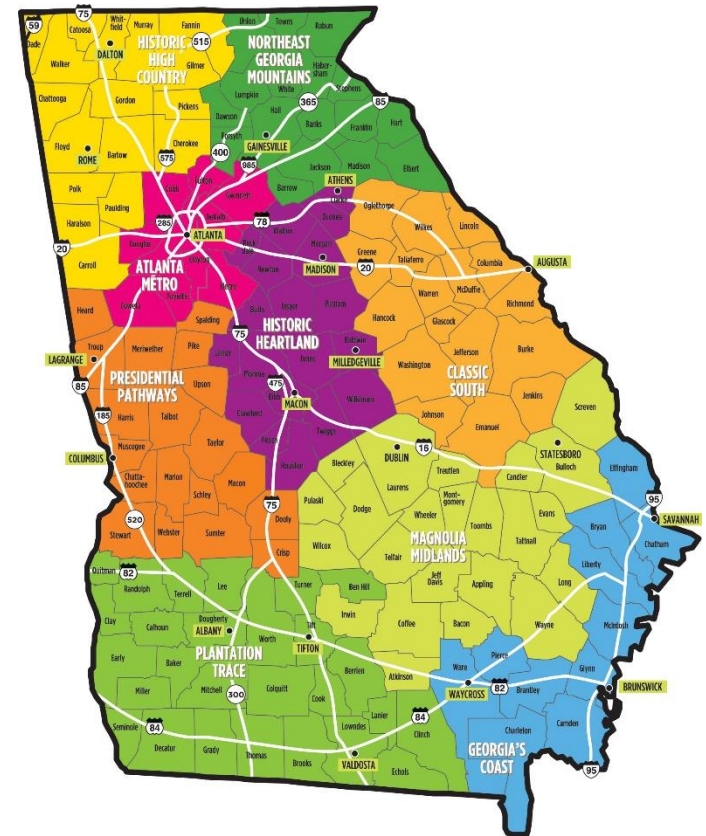
Classic South Outdoors Association

The Central Georgia Outdoors network in Washington County has been a successful partnership and could benefit from expansion into a regional or statewide organization.

Building upon the success of the Washington County organization, the first expansion should include the Classic South region of Central East Georgia. This initial growth will allow the organization to add members and increase reach while still developing the mission of the local business's needs. Following successful regional expansion, the team should work with GDEcD, Tourism Division to pilot a statewide organization.

Recommendation: Establishment of the Classic South or Georgia Outdoors Association

- Work with Georgia Tourism and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to identify statewide needs and initiatives for the hunting and fishing industries
- Serve as a statewide marketing organization to advance the state's outdoor industry both domestically and internationally



Recreation & Ecotourism

For more information relating to financial incentives for businesses, please check out the Economic Development Finance Program Packet at:

<http://www.dca.ga.gov/economic/TaxCredits/programs/downloads/EDFD.pdf>

Tourism Product Development Resource Team Community Funding Request:

<http://www.marketgeorgia.org/article/new-for-2016-tourism-product-development-resource-team-community-funding>

Film Industry



Film In Georgia

- Economic impact for **FY15 hit \$6 billion**, up from \$1.33 billion in FY10 when the Camera Ready Community Program began.
- Qualifying productions receive 20% tax credit, plus additional 10% credit for embedding a Georgia promotional logo in the film title or credits
- 800 film and television projects since 1972
- 158 feature film and television productions shot during FY14, combined production spend of \$1.4 billion.
- Unique program in Georgia, Georgia's Camera Ready Program
<http://www.georgia.org/industries/entertainment/georgia-film-tv-production/>
- Have an active Camera Ready Program Committee that can work to photograph locations and respond to requests from the Georgia Film Office.
- Recommendation – Tennille, as well as other Washington County locations could benefit from being added to the State of Georgia camera ready program. This is the state's database for sourcing locations for TV and movie productions. <http://www.georgia.org/industries/entertainment/georgia-film-tv-production>

RECOMMENDATION: Keep taken advantage of Camera Ready and populate the state's photo database for sourcing locations (<http://georgia.org/reel-crew>)

Agritourism



Agritourism

Waller Family Museum

This restored family home is a depiction of life in the early 1900's. Within the museum there are farm and home implements that reflect the advancements in technology in the last decade. It is a wonderful educational tool as well as a public interest and tourism piece.

Providing interpretation of the artifacts would enhance the visitor's experience.



Agritourism

The Barn at Hitchcock Farms

Farm Weddings and Events have become very popular in the last few years. The type of facilities are very difficult to find in certain areas of the state. These type of facilities have also been expanded to accommodate fundraisers, BBQ's, and all types of events. As this is a privately owned venue, the owners could expand use with some marketing and promotion.

Recommendation: The Barn at Hitchcock Farms should be marketed for weddings.



Agritourism

Downtown Sandersville Farmer's Market

Farmer's Markets are a great way to get fresh farm produce and homemade products. It is also a great way to get people into your downtown area and to get people to "Buy Local" supporting the local economy. There have been some great promotions at the market, they need to continue and do more to keep the public interested in the market. For example, hold food demonstrations by using the locally made products in easy to cook recipes.



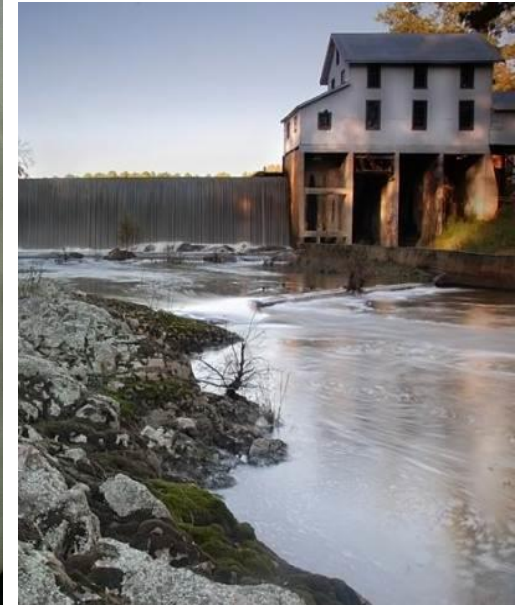
Agritourism

Hamburg State Park Mill

There are less than 20 water driven mills still operating in the state. The mill section of the park appears to be in very good shape and we were told they sold every bag of meal they processed! This could be a good “fundraiser” to support the park.

There could be a small “test plot” of corn and the milling demonstration times need to be posted and advertised. Having some skillet cornbread cooking over an open fire in the fall might increase interest and maybe use scout troops or outdoor outfitters to man that attraction. Check out the many events at the Cedar Creek Grist Mill

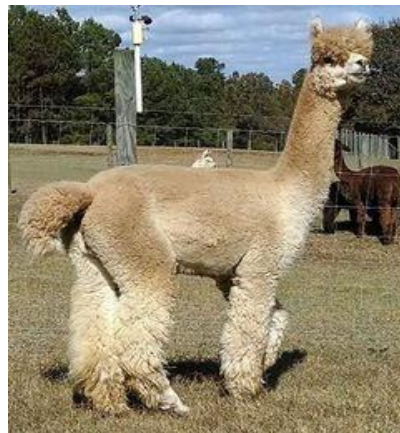
<http://www.cedarcreekgristmill.com/special-events>



Agritourism

Potential Agritourism Projects

1. Consider developing a farm tour of local farms as a fundraiser for a specific project. It could be advertised to surrounding counties and larger cities. Each farm should have some information or demonstration and potentially a set up for product tasting from their farm or neighboring ones. There are a number of potential locations, enough to change the event over time. It will open the eyes of the community to what is available and support whatever project is chosen. End the day with a farm to table dinner on a local property. Tickets can be separate to the events or a combination ticket.
2. Look into a community garden, maybe at a open space at a county property or even the school property. Food products could be given to a local charity to help feed the hungry or used to teach people how to put up fresh foods or how to cook with them. This has worked well in other communities using Master Gardeners, Garden Club, or church groups.



Agritourism

Georgia Grown Products

The Georgia Grown logo has grown in popularity in this state and the surrounding ones. It promotes locally made products and has become also known to be associated with a quality products. Communities love to support locals and their products need to be available in a community location. Visit the Genuine Georgia store link to see how the locally grown products are marketed in the City of Greensboro, Ga store: <http://www.genuinegeorgia.com/>



Historic Preservation



Historic Preservation

Why is historic preservation important to tourism?

Heritage tourism helps make historic preservation economically viable by using historic structures and landscapes to attract and serve travelers. Heritage tourism can be an attractive economic revitalization strategy, especially as studies have consistently shown that heritage travelers stay longer and spend more money than other kinds of travelers. As an added bonus, a good heritage tourism program improves the quality of life for residents as well as serving visitors.

By promoting a healthy environment of historic preservation in your community, historic properties can find new life in this millennium that allows visitors to continue to connect with their significant past. Historic downtown buildings can become unique lodging for visitors, old farm buildings transformed into boutique art shops, and former cotton warehouses into breweries or meeting space.

By saving a historic structure and creating a new use for it, local communities benefit by reviving a dead structure on their tax rolls and spurring new development in blighted areas. Many state and federal programs also exist to make projects in historically significant structures more feasible and financially beneficial to investors.



Historic Preservation

Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Historic Preservation Division

www.georgiashpo.org

The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) is Georgia's State Historic Preservation Office, or SHPO. Every state has a SHPO, established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as Amended (NHPA).

HPD's **mission** is to promote the preservation and use of historic places for a better Georgia.

Programs and Services

- Environmental Review
- Preservation Planning
- Historic Resources Survey/GNAHRGIS (statewide)
- National Register of Historic Places
- Historic Rehabilitation Tax Incentives
- Certified Local Government Program
- Outreach Programs and Education
- African American Programs
- Office of the State Archaeologist and State Archaeology Program



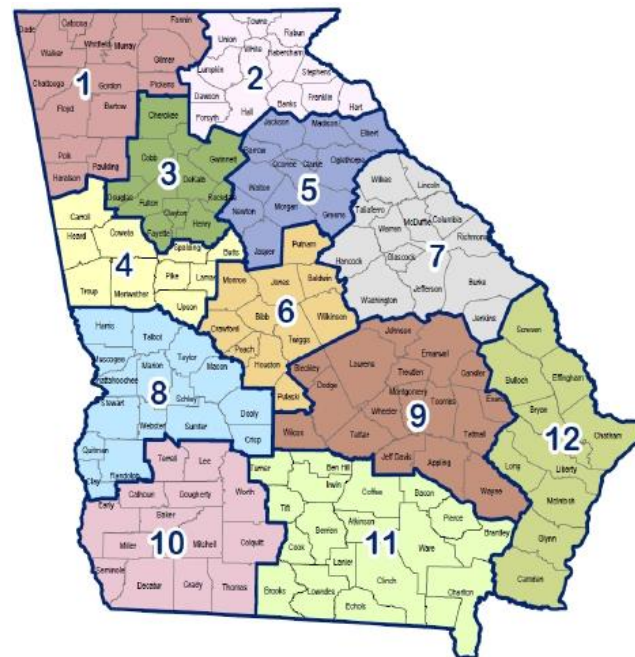
Historic Preservation

Regional Preservation Planning

Georgia has 12 Regional Commission (RCs) that provide comprehensive planning assistance to local governments. The RCs employ a regional historic preservation planner who can provide preservation planning services. These services are coordinated with HPD.

Anne Floyd, Regional Historic Preservation Planner
 CSRA Regional Commission
 3626 Walton Way Extension, Suite 300
 Augusta, Georgia 30909
 Phone: (706) 210-2015
 Email: afloyd@csrarc.ga.gov

Georgia Regional Commissions



Historic Preservation- National Register of Historic Places

The National Register (NR) is our country's official list of historic **buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts** worthy of preservation and is maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Listing of resources 50 years or older in the above categories meeting certain criteria are eligible.

The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) nominates eligible properties in Georgia to the National Register so they can receive preservation benefits and incentives. Being listed in the National Register provides formal recognition of a property's **historical, architectural, or archaeological significance** based on national standards used in every state.

National Register designation identifies significant historic properties that can be taken into account in a broad range of preservation and development activities. It also ensures that these properties will be considered in the planning of federally assisted projects.

Washington County has a rich variety of historic and cultural resources. Working with Washington County and the City of Sandersville, the Washington County Historical Society (WCHS) has restored several historic sites for tourism and genealogical research. Washington County owns the Old Jail operated by the WCHS as a genealogical center and museum. This facility is beautifully rehabilitated and landscaped for public use.

The Historical Society continues to work towards museum artifact conservation and interpretation. The genealogical has a flourishing archives for public use.



Historic Preservation- National Register of Historic Places



The Washington County Chamber of Commerce displays an exhibit of watercolor paintings by artist Sterling Everett of historic buildings in the county designed by the late 19th to early 20th-century architect Charles Edward Choate. Choate is the only architect in the state of Georgia with a statewide thematic nomination of buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places. There are nine of the Choate-designed buildings listed in the National Register in Sandersville and Tennille:

Holt Brothers Banking Company Building, Sandersville
James E. Johnson House, Sandersville
James Kelley House, Tennille
Charles Madden House, Tennille
Thomas W. Smith House, Tennille
Tennille Banking Company Building
Tennille Baptist Church
Tennille Woman's Clubhouse
Washington Manufacturing Company, demolished
Wrightsville and Tennille Railroad Company Building

Recommendations: Prints of several Sterling Everett paintings could be sold at the Chamber, museums, at Tennille City Hall, and at antique and gift stores. Include a print of the former Courthouse at the Brown House Museum.

A copy of all National Register nominations should be kept at the Chamber, Genealogical Center, Brown House Museum and other relevant places.

Historic Preservation- National Register of Historic Places



The Brown House is where General William Tecumseh Sherman headquartered in Sandersville during the Civil War. This museum has period rooms, historical exhibits, and a permanent Civil War art exhibit depicting Washington County's legacy.

Recommendation: Use the Brown House art exhibition guide as a way to develop a Civil War driving tour throughout Washington County to all of the sites depicted in the paintings.

Washington County has many listings of historic resources in the National Register of Historic Places: Four historic districts and 13 individual listings. The courthouse is part of a statewide thematic courthouse listing.

- *Washington County Courthouse*
- *Church-Smith-Harris Street Historic District*
- *North Harris Street Historic District*
- *Sandersville Commercial and Industrial District*
- *Warthen Historic District*



Historic Preservation

Federal and State Rehabilitation Tax Credit Projects

Federal and State government tax incentives are available for owners of an historic property who carry out a substantial rehabilitation. All properties must be listed in, or eligible for, the National Register- or Georgia Register of Historic Places as an individual property or as a contributing property to an NR-listed historic district. Plans for project work and photos must be submitted to HPD for approval and to the National Park Service for federal incentives. Work must meet the Secretary of the Interior's or Department of Natural Resources Standards for Rehabilitation.

What does the Tax Credit do for me economically?

Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RITC)

- For income producing properties only
- 20% tax credit of qualified rehab expenses on your federal income tax (no cap)
- Three part application with documentation required of floor plans, photos (before, during, and after construction)



State Preferential Property Tax Assessment for Rehabilitated Historic Properties

- For income producing properties
- 25% tax credit of qualified rehab expenses on your state income tax, capped at \$300,000
- Property tax assessment freeze for over 8 years

For primary residence

- 25% tax credit of qualified rehabilitation expenses on your state income tax, capped at \$100,000
- Property tax assessment freeze for over 8 years

Historic rehabilitation generates jobs, enhances property values, creates affordable housing, and augments revenue for local governments. It has been proven that for every \$1 dollar spent in historic rehabilitation expenditures, \$5 is returned to the local economy.

\$

Historic Preservation

Federal and State Rehabilitation Tax Credit Projects



This house owner in the Warthen Historic District used the state rehabilitation tax credit



This commercial building owner in the Sandersville Historic District used the federal and state tax incentives to rehab the Masonic Building for loft apartments and storefronts



Historic rehabilitation generates jobs, enhances property values, creates affordable housing, and augments revenue for local governments. It has been proven that for every \$1 dollar spent in historic rehabilitation expenditures, \$5 is returned to the local economy.

\$

Historic Preservation

Federal and State Rehabilitation Tax Credit Projects



Recommendation: For owners with buildings on the National Register of Historic Places within the Sandersville Commercial and Industrial Historic District, could be eligible for the tax incentives. Using the incentives requires substantial rehabilitation but is an economic benefit to owners. The team recommends encouraging property owners of historic properties to use these tax credits when rehabilitating their property.

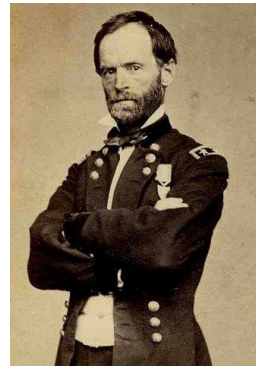
Historic Preservation

Record Local History

Historic preservation doesn't have to center only on buildings; your local stories can become powerful tourism product.

Team Recommends:

- Record stories from residents
- Gather historic photos and make digital copies
- Photograph historic maps and documents
- Take a county-wide photometric index of historic and natural sites
- Partner with local/regional college/university to get assistance with recording Washington County's local history



Historic Preservation- National Register of Historic Places



Other listings on the National Register of Historic Places located in Washington County are:

- *Francis Plantation, SE of Davisboro*
- *City Cemetery, Sandersville*
- *Thomas Jefferson Elder High and Industrial School*

Recommendations: The T. J. Elder High and Industrial School is listed in the National Register of Historic Places at the state level of significance. It is a Rosenwald Plan school in an intact H-shape erected in 1927-28 and with its 1938 addition of six classrooms and restrooms at the rear, it remains the oldest school building in the county. The site dates to 1887 for educational use. Inside, visitors may view a museum of African-American history, and the auditorium is used for community events. T.J. Elder is buried at the front of the school.



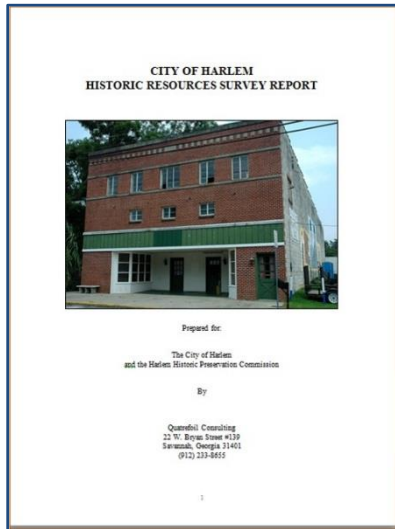
Funds are needed for the maintenance of the building by “The Elderites.” Promotion of this facility as both an event center and as a historic site will draw tourists to this important African-American site. Copies of the National Register nomination should be available for research. One resource for small museums is the following link:

<http://www.aam-us.org/about-us/what-we-do/small-museums>



The T.J. Elder Rosenwald Plan school site should be the trailhead for a Washington County African-American Heritage Trail. Oral history interviews should be conducted for associated Elderite citizens to discuss the school’s history and the civil rights period of the county history.

Historic Preservation - Historic Resources Survey & Certified Local Government Program



Historic Resources Survey

Unincorporated Washington County had an inventory of historic resources conducted in 2014 that is recorded in GNAHRGIS. Its contained jurisdictions do not have an up to date Historic Resources Survey. Identifying historic properties through surveys is an essential first step in a community's preservation planning efforts.

Recommendation: This project has been entered into each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan work program as a community volunteer project using the HPD inventory form. Or, begin the process of petitioning the UGA College of Environment + Design students through the public service and outreach program to inventory community historic resources.

Certified Local Government Program

Any city, town, or county that has enacted a [historic preservation ordinance](#), enforces that ordinance through a local preservation commission, and has met requirements outlined in the Procedures for Georgia's Certified Local Government Program is eligible to become a CLG.

Benefits of becoming a Certified Local Government include:

- Eligibility for federal [Historic Preservation Fund grants](#)
- The opportunity to review local nominations for the [National Register of Historic Places](#) prior to consideration by the Georgia [National Register Review Board](#).
- Opportunities for technical assistance.
- Improved communication and coordination among local, state, and federal preservation activities.

Historic Preservation- Historic Resources Survey & Certified Local Government Program



Recommendation: The City of Sandersville adopted the model historic preservation ordinance many years ago. To become active in the Certified Local Government program, Sandersville will need to appoint a historic preservation commission who will set up Bylaws and Rules of Procedure. From here, downtown Sandersville's future preservation efforts can be strengthened because review of all plans for rehabilitations, additions, reconstructions, and demolition by neglect would be addressed by the commission to ensure that community members make good design decisions. HPD is the governing agency for this national program.



Historic Preservation – Georgia Centennial Farm Program



Recommendations: Encourage other centennial farm owners to apply for designation. Applications can be obtained from www.georgiashpo.org or from the CSRA RC. Awards are made annually by HPD at the Georgia State Fair in Perry, Georgia.



Georgia Centennial Farm Program

The Georgia Centennial Farm Program was developed in 1992 to recognize farms and farm families who have contributed to the preservation of Georgia's agricultural resources and to encourage the continued use of these farms for future generations. The program encourages Georgia's residents to save and recognize farms that have contributed to Georgia's agricultural heritage for 100 years or more. Recognition is given to farmers through one of three distinguishing awards:

Centennial Heritage Farm Award (honors farms owned by members of the same family for 100 years or more *and that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places*:

- *Forest Grove, Sarah W. Lansdell and Lyle W. Lansdell (2002)*

Centennial Family Farm Award (does not require continual family ownership, but farms must be at least 100 years old and listed in the National Register of Historic Places:

- *C.R. Josey Farm, C. Ray Josey (1996)*

Centennial Family Farm Award (recognizes farms owned by members of the same family for 100 years or more that are not listed in the National Register of Historic Places):

- *Newsom Home Place, Cummings and Newsom, LLC (1997)*
- *Forest Grove, Sarah Wilkerson Lansdell (2002)*
- *Wilson Family Farm, W. Bruce Wilson (2007)*

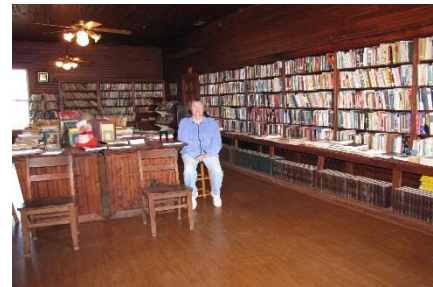
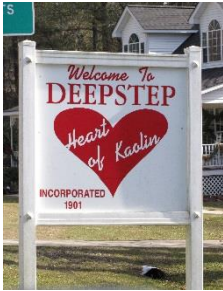
Historic Preservation - City of Davisboro



Recommendation: The City of Davisboro local officials should work with the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) to see which historic properties would be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places with a combined commercial, industrial, and residential historic district. This district could be put together by a volunteer committee working with the Regional Commission or budgeted for a consultant to complete.

The City is doing a great job of maintaining their historic properties and encouraging owners to maintain their properties. Funds are needed for maintenance of the Community House. The lending library in a historic building could be re-activated with volunteers.

Historic Preservation - City of Deepstep



Recommendation: The City of Deepstep officials should work with HPD to see which historic properties would be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. A possible district made up of commercial and residential buildings could be developed either by a volunteer committee working with the Regional Commission or budgeted for a consultant to complete.

The City is doing a great job of maintaining their historic properties and encouraging owners to maintain their properties. The city hall and library, built 1902, is unique with its committee-operated lending library and museum of local history.

Historic Preservation – Town of Harrison and City of Oconee



Recommendation: The Town of Harrison should promote to visitors its attachment to the active railroad that operates through town and to drive the streets to view early 20th century built housing. Its history could be displayed in an area of city hall put together by volunteers. A comprehensive plan work program item is to inventory residential housing in the town that will reveal significant historic houses. The City of Oconee has a wonderful history with its attachment to the active railroad. A community history discussing the construction of the Central of Georgia railroad station from Tennille and the trestle bridge built over the Oconee River by William Wadley about 1840 as one of the first trestle bridges is unique. Part of the original trestle bridge remains although transportation is difficult to get there. A print and/or postcard of this bridge could be sold. The City is doing a great job of encouraging owners to rehabilitate their historic properties. A small museum exhibit of this important history could be put together and displayed at City Hall or in the Community Center for visitors to see. Better yet, a durable sign of community history could be erected.

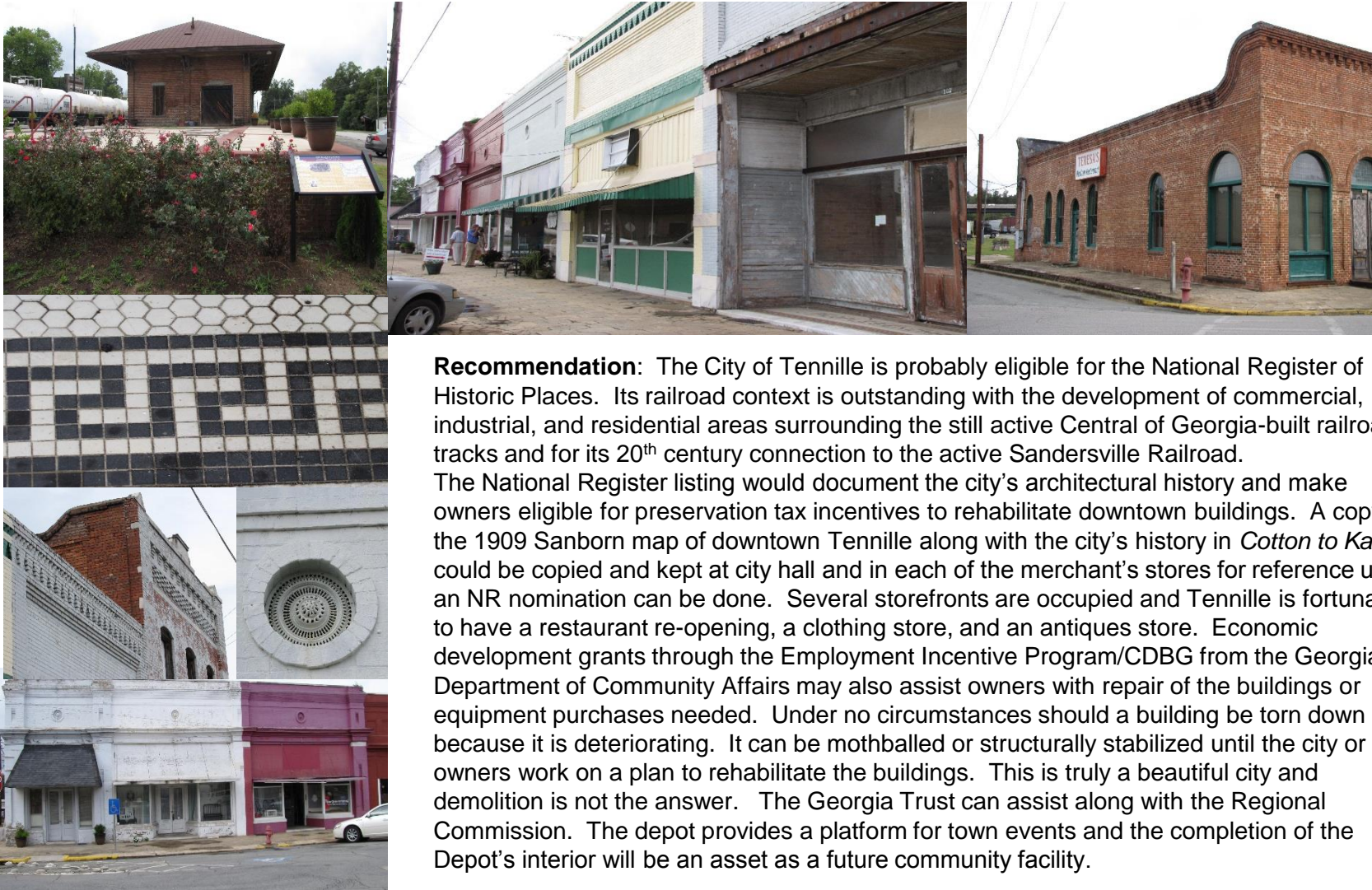
Historic Preservation – Town of Riddleville



Recommendation: The Town of Riddleville is a small community town that may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. With its fascinating former college history and intact Greek Revival style pastorium, signage erected to discuss the town's heritage and cemetery would attract and educate visitors.

The two-story commercial building would make a great antiques store and it has been well-maintained on the exterior. The unpainted commissary building should be kept structurally maintained and never painted. The "Potato House" is a plain brick commercial building that is probably historic. A mural of a potato or basket of potatoes or Mr. Potato Head should be painted on the building to attract visitors and perhaps a tenant. Signage explaining how the building got its name would also enhance visitation to the town. Kudos for keeping this small town intact with good maintenance. A work program item in the comprehensive plan is to plot the graves and record historical information for the Historic Riddleville Cemetery (Revolutionary and Civil War era) and to develop an inventory of historic buildings, both residential and commercial, for the town.

Historic Preservation – City of Tennille



Recommendation: The City of Tennille is probably eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Its railroad context is outstanding with the development of commercial, industrial, and residential areas surrounding the still active Central of Georgia-built railroad tracks and for its 20th century connection to the active Sandersville Railroad. The National Register listing would document the city's architectural history and make owners eligible for preservation tax incentives to rehabilitate downtown buildings. A copy of the 1909 Sanborn map of downtown Tennille along with the city's history in *Cotton to Kaolin* could be copied and kept at city hall and in each of the merchant's stores for reference until an NR nomination can be done. Several storefronts are occupied and Tennille is fortunate to have a restaurant re-opening, a clothing store, and an antiques store. Economic development grants through the Employment Incentive Program/CDBG from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs may also assist owners with repair of the buildings or equipment purchases needed. Under no circumstances should a building be torn down because it is deteriorating. It can be mothballed or structurally stabilized until the city or owners work on a plan to rehabilitate the buildings. This is truly a beautiful city and demolition is not the answer. The Georgia Trust can assist along with the Regional Commission. The depot provides a platform for town events and the completion of the Depot's interior will be an asset as a future community facility.

Historic Preservation – City of Tennille



Recommendations Continued: The City of Tennille has an inactive Certified Local Government program for ensuring good design for building improvements. It could be and is recommended to be re-activated with the appointment of an historic preservation commission. A downtown district was designated for design review which could be helpful in encouraging citizens to use the preservation tax incentives to rehabilitate buildings and help improve the downtown structures. A town clean up day with paint and minor repairs would improve the downtown appearance.

Prints of the Sterling Everett paintings displayed at the Chamber of Commerce and/or postcards could be sold in the downtown area.

Housing is an issue and the historic housing stock could be rehabbed under certain criteria in the CDBG Housing program and CHIP programs. The City could apply to join the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) program to further the community's skills in housing rehabilitation and grants available. The Regional Commission offers an affordable housing program that could be of assistance.

Historic Preservation – Community of Warthen



Recommendations: The Warthen Historic District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and it encompasses an entire community of late 19th and early 20th century buildings that idealize pristine and serene rural living. The buildings are primarily restored. Owners may take advantage of the historic preservation tax incentives.

The oldest log jail in the state of Georgia, dated 1785, is located here and once confined Aaron Burr on his way to trial. Even though it has been restored it is somewhat fragile and its stabilization should be checked on periodically. The cemetery houses the Warthen family who are founders of the community. It is like a walk in a garden. Cleaning the graves would be in order by an organization that specializes in conservation such as the Chicora Foundation of Columbia, S.C - <http://www.chicora.org/>. They held a cemetery conference in Sandersville for the Old City Cemetery there.



ARTS

Hamburg State Park

Hamburg State Park is a beautiful resource, and the old mill is incredibly interesting. Unfortunately, some of the displays and not in good shape.

- Make sure that only copies of historic photos and documents are exhibited. The originals should be kept in a safe place that is not exposed to the elements and changing temperatures.
- Make sure that the displays are neat and clean.
- Make sure that all items that are on display are labeled so that patrons are not dependent on a docent to interpret everything for them. The labels can be created on a desktop printer, and the style of the labels should be unified.
- Find a local community group that would be interested in repairing or replacing the signs and exhibits that are worn and tattered. Perhaps this could be a project for the Boy Scouts, a Kiwanis or Rotary Club, or a high school service organization.



Historic Preservation – Sandersville Elementary School



Recommendations: The Sandersville Elementary School is approximately 70,000 SF in size and has a new governing Sandersville School Building Authority tasked with how to re-purpose the facility. It is remembered by the community as the school that everyone attended and graduated. Then, it closed in 2009. The auditorium would be a great facility for seated community events. From a preservation viewpoint, changing the original seats is frowned upon, but for continued use and a more comfortable participant experience, it may be prudent to do so.

The SES facility may have many uses such as being leased by another educational institution. However, a developer may be able to use the historic preservation tax incentives to develop it into a senior living facility or multi-use facility. This was done recently with the former Waynesboro High School, built in 1936, in Burke County, Georgia. The developer used the preservation tax incentives, and in December 2011, the ribbon cutting was held for the rehabbed Waynesborough Academy Senior Residences developed by Bridgeland Development, LLC and G. Randall Hammond & Company. The result is 20 new and 19 rehabilitated apartment homes designed specifically to meet the housing needs of seniors. The rehabilitated school is within walking distance of Waynesboro's downtown, just as SES is close to downtown Sandersville and medical facilities. See HPD website, www.georgiashpo.org and search for Preservation Posts, Issue 33, February 2012 for opening. A professional development company will be useful to raise funds and write a master plan for development.

Historic Preservation – Preservation Assistance

Georgia DNR/Historic Preservation Division

See HPD website, www.georgiashpo.org for all programs and services

Tax Incentives, Historic Resources Surveys, National Register of Historic Places, and Certified Local Government program

Grants:

- Historic Preservation Fund for Certified Local Governments
- Georgia Heritage Grant, DNR/Historic Preservation Division for bricks and mortar and preservation planning
- National Trust for Historic Preservation

Preservation Briefs, National Park Service, guidance on preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings. Especially useful with the tax incentives program

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm>

Georgia Department of Economic Development - <http://www.georgia.org/industries/georgia-tourism/>

Georgia Department of Community Affairs - <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/>

Regional Preservation Planner, CSRA Regional Commission -

<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/development/planningqualitygrowth/documents/publications/regionalcommissions/rcdirectory.pdf>

Heritage and Cultural



Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Tourism as Economic Development

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and is essential to a community's economic vitality and sustainability. Georgia's tourism is one of the states top industries.

Georgia is one of the top 10 states in the country for heritage tourism visitation. More travelers than ever are walking the historic streets of Savannah, Visiting Native American sites, Civil Rights sites, seeing where the Civil War was fought, and discovering agricultural history around the state.

The historic and cultural resources associated with people and events of a community's past give that community its sense of identity, tell its story, and are tangible reflections of a community's heritage.

History is a selling point for a community. The recognition of an area's historic resources can bring about neighborhood revitalization, private investment and citizenship building.

When a communities' travel related entities partner with public or private organizations, the cultural, and natural resources are more effectively promoted to meet the heritage traveler's desire.



Characteristics of the Heritage & Cultural Tourist

- Travel more often (3 or more major trips per year)
- Heritage and Cultural travel decisions are heavily influenced by women, the traditional planners of families and couples
- Stay in a community longer than average visitors (4.7 nights vs. 3.4 nights)
- 4 in 10 visitors to Georgia say they extended their trips because of heritage and cultural activities available in the area
- Spend more money (\$1025 vs. \$657) and tend to be generous in spending than average visitors
- Show them the real thing...They insist on authenticity in your attractions, stories and interpretation!

Source: Mandala Research LLC, 2013



Cultural Heritage behavior of General Leisure Travelers

While culture or heritage activities may not be the MOTIVATOR for the trip, travelers often engage in culture and heritage as part of their visit to a destination.

- Visited heritage buildings/historical buildings (42%)
- Attended cultural/heritage fair, festival (40%)
- Attended historical reenactments (38%)
- Participated in an organized tour of local history or culture (37%)
- Visited living history museums (37%)
- Took a tour focusing on local architecture (34%)
- Researched family history (32%)
- Shopped for items made by local artisans, craftspeople (31%)
- Visited farms and ranches (25%)
- Explored small towns (24%)
- Experienced local or regional cuisine for a unique and memorable experience (23%)
- Self guided walking tour (22%)

Source: Mandala Research LLC, 2013

Heritage and Cultural Tourism

A Short History of Washington County

Washington County, the 10th county in Georgia was established in 1784 and named in honor of President George Washington. Revolutionary War veterans were awarded land grants for their service and were the earliest European settlers in the county. Warthen was the earliest settlement and is the site of the log jail.

In 1796 the state legislature designated Sandersville, in the approximate Geographic center of the county, as the seat. Many post office communities grew to either thrive or fade as the railroad routing became the determining factor in a town's success. Other communities in Washington County include Davisboro, Deepstep, Oconee, Riddlesville, Tennille, and Warthen.

In November 1864, Washington County encountered the Civil War as it was directly in the path of the left wing of General Sherman's invading army. Sixty thousand Federals invaded the county, forging from farms and plantations freely. While stopping in Sandersville, General Sherman chose the Brown House as his headquarters and upon his departure two days later, public buildings like the courthouse and jail were put to the torch and in Tennille the depot was burned and railroad destroyed. Before leaving the county, Sherman's army encountered stiff resistance at Ball's Ferry Landing on the Oconee River, but forced a crossing and drove off the Confederates.

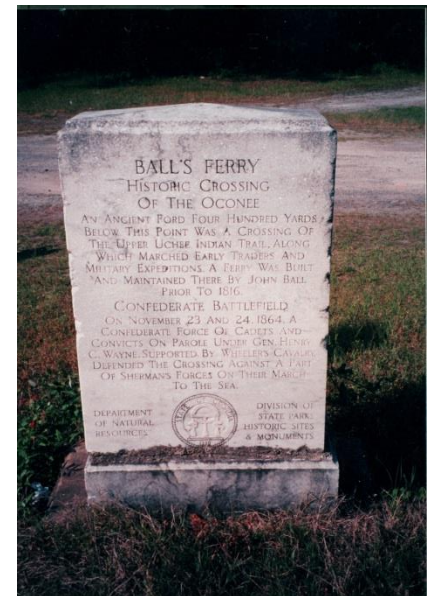
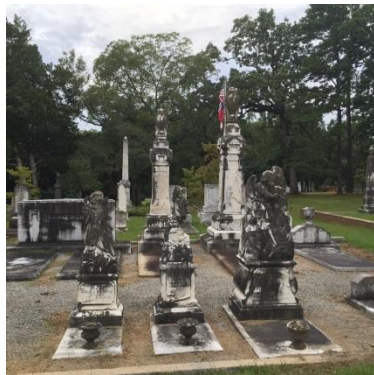


Heritage and Cultural Tourism

History of Washington County

In 1868, a new courthouse was constructed, then enlarged in 1899. Brick buildings replaced the wooden store fronts burned by Sherman's army and the county prospered. Agriculture and timber were an economic staple and high cotton prices maintained the prosperity through most of the 1920s until the Boll Weevil crisis crashed the cotton market and forced economic diversity.

As the cotton markets declined, a new industry appeared in Washington County, around the mining of the silicate rich clay kaolin. Kaolin deposits generally follow the fall line and is used in paper, medicines, paints, ceramics, and other products that are used worldwide. Washington County has become the worlds largest refiner and is known as the "Kaolin Capital of the World."



Heritage and Cultural Tourism

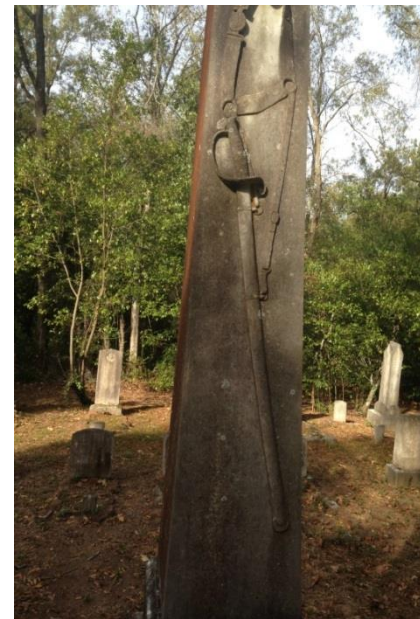
Washington County's Impressive Civil War Heritage

Washington County was important in Georgia's Civil War effort from the beginning of the conflict in 1861. The county earned a reputation throughout Georgia and the South at the beginning of the war for producing fifteen companies of Confederate soldiers, an unusually high number for a rural location with a small population. Washington County, with its fertile soil, was a major supplier of foodstuffs for the Confederate cause that were loaded on trains in Tennille for shipment to the armies in the field.

Washington County would experience the war first hand in the fall of 1864 when the both wings of General Sherman's army, about 60,000 soldiers, traveled through the county cutting a destructive swath. Sherman and his army arrived on the outskirts of Sandersville on the morning of November 26, 1864 and had to fight their way into town against a moderately stiff Confederate resistance. It was noted by a Federal office that the Confederate stand at Sandersville was the first resistance the army had encountered since the beginning of the campaign. Due to having to fight for the town and because of the rumor of the execution of 12 Federal prisoners, Sherman let loose a particularly harsh vengeance on Sandersville and Tennille. While Sherman headquartered at the Brown House his troops forged liberally, ransacked, and burned throughout the county. The Central Railroad at Tennille was destroyed as well.

In May of 1865, Confederate President Jefferson Davis came through Sandersville while attempting to evade capture.

<http://occupationofsandersville.org/history-2/>



Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Commemorating Sherman's Occupation

Sandersville began an annual tradition with the "Occupation of Sandersville," commemoration of 2014 on the 150th anniversary of Sherman's march through Washington County. The well planned event was a great success, drawing thousands to see the art exhibit at the Brown House, take the tours, experience the Battle of Sandersville and the battles at Forest Grove, and attend the ball. The success was repeated in 2015 with several thousand attendees enjoying the festivities.

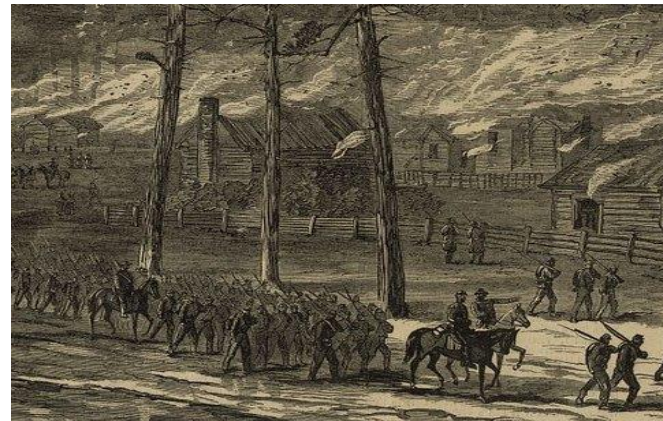
Recommendations: Attendance was very strong at both year's events, however, a goal should be set to get more attendees from outside of Washington County. Increasing social media presence is recommended. Joining a Civil War specific marketing organization will help get your message out beyond Georgia for a \$500.00 annual membership fee.

Tri-State Civil War Association

<http://civilwarsouth.org/>

World History Magazine Group

<http://www.armchairgeneral.com>



Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Using the story told by historic art to guide visitors

Washington County has a unique attraction in the Civil War paintings and photographs on exhibit at the Brown House Museum. Artist Tonia Marynell and her art students, have put their vision of the tumultuous and impactful era of the Civil War in Washington County, and each work of art tell an incredible story.

Recommendations: Each of the paintings have a story to tell, and the stories occurred at various locations around the county, so they are ideal for an audio driving tour, allowing visitors to see the county.

Giving the visitor an experiential interpretation of the art using narrative with character voice, music and sound effects can transport visitors back to the time of the event. A printed map/brochure to guide visitors could be sold, or made available on the Brown House website for free. The tour should focus on sites where there is still something related to the event that can be seen.

There are several Civil War driving trails following General Sherman's March to the Sea that lead visitors through Washington County to the Brown House Museum. The addition of a Civil War art audio driving tour would more fully relate your story and get visitors to travel around the county.



Heritage and Cultural Tourism

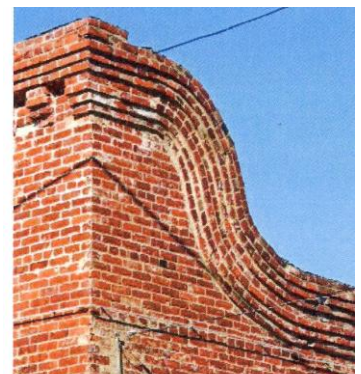
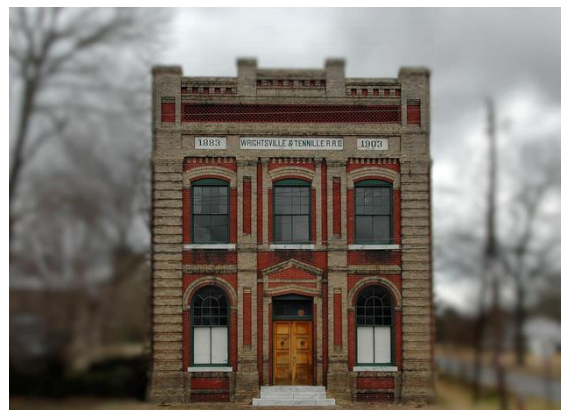
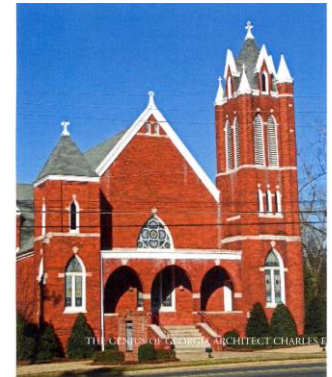
The Architectural Tourist: Celebrate the Genius of Charles E. Choate

Georgia born and UGA educated Charles Choate designed buildings all over Georgia, but no locale has a more well-preserved collection of his elegant and artistic buildings than Sandersville and Tennille. Although a walking tour and exhibit on Choate currently exist, more can be done to promote the Choate legacy in Washington County.

Recommendation: Architectural tourism is a growing niche in the heritage and cultural tourism market. Student groups, preservation organizations and architectural groups would have a great interest in seeing such a large grouping of buildings by such a renown architect. An audio tour through a phone app would update the current walking tour brochure. The tour could be marketed to architectural and historic preservation programs around the southeast.

Architectural City Tours

<http://www.architecturalcitytours.com/index.html>

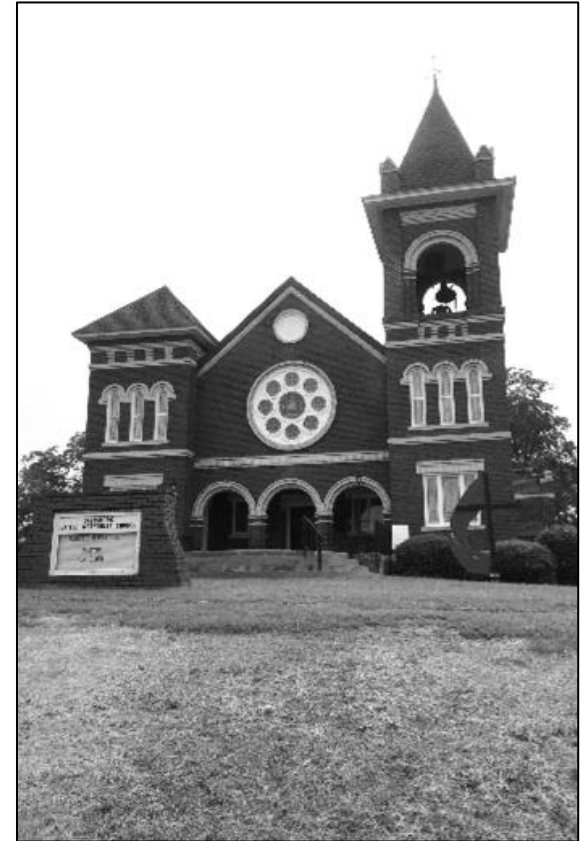


Heritage and Cultural

Historic Rural Churches of Washington County

As one of the earliest counties in Georgia, going all the way back to 1784, Washington County has an especially large number of historic rural churches of numerous vernacular architectural styles. Some of these churches are not in use and in a very fragile condition, while others may be somewhat active or fully active and most are on private property. As a niche of architectural or ecumenical heritage tourism, historic rural churches were the center of a community and are a draw for visitors interested in the roots of county growth, genealogy, and religious history. The associated cemeteries are equally important as the final resting place for pioneers and early residents of the county.

Recommendations: The documenting organization Historic Rural Churches of Georgia is working towards its mission of listing all of the rural churches over 100 years old throughout the state. Currently Washington County listings include Antioch Baptist and Salem Methodist. The Georgia Department of Economic Development is working with HRCG on a test trail to connect churches in several counties in Classic South. A survey of rural churches should be undertaken and connected as a trail through the county, and the county would benefit from working with HRCG to allow the public to be aware of these important resources. <http://www.hrcga.org>



Heritage and Cultural Tourism

African American Heritage in Washington County

Washington County has been a center of African American life since the formation of the county in the late 18th century. Today, the population of the county is over 50% African American and many decedents of slaves and freemen still live throughout the county as is documented in Adam Adolphus' genealogical study *African Americans of Washington County, Georgia from Colonial Times Through Reconstruction*.

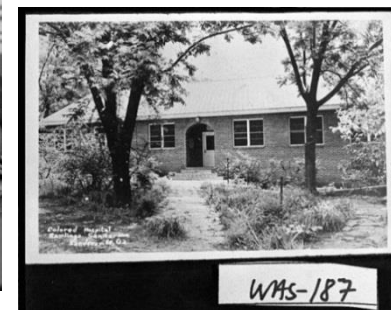
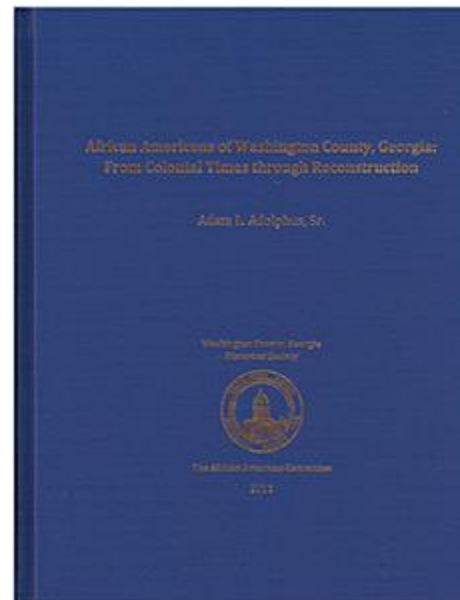
Washington County has many historic African American churches, businesses, homes, cemeteries, schools as well as connections to famous families. Iconic 20th century figures Elijah Muhammad and the family of Berry Gordy have direct connections to Sandersville. Elijah Muhammad was the former leader of the Nation of Islam and mentor to historical figures Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan. The T.J. Elder School would be an ideal location for a Washington County African American heritage trail.

https://www.culturaltourismdc.org/portal/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=e9ded752-0908-42f5-9d30-e4b01555db39&groupId=701982

Recommendations – The many African American sites could be connected, mapped, and interpreted for county wide tours. Tours could be specifically themed (cemeteries, churches) or offered as a whole. There are wonderful stories to be told and an audio tour is an option.

Washington County could also be promoted as a center of African American genealogy and marketed as a family reunion center.

<http://www.lowcountryafricana.com/african-americans-of-washington-county-georgia-from-colonial-times-through-reconstruction-by-adam-adolphus-sr/>

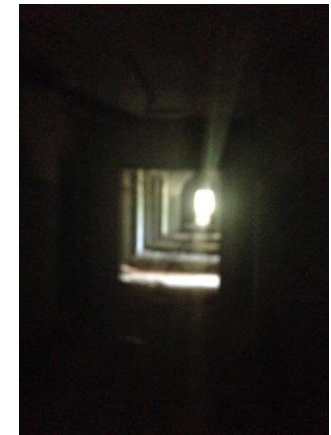


Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Old Washington County Jail and Museum / History & Ghost Tours

Every Southern community has a tradition or history of having haunted houses or locations. Historic homes, buildings, battlefields and cemeteries are locations associated by the general public with supernatural or mysterious happenings, and there are tourists that will pay to hear a scary story told well. Many communities across the country are capitalizing on their stories and haunted traditions. Ghost tours are a popular method of attracting tourist and locals alike to come visit, enjoy your stories, eat at restaurants, shop, and stay in your lodging. Ghost tours charge between \$15.00 to \$30.00 for a 90 minute tour. The City of Blackshear opened their own Halloween haunted attraction a few years ago and netted \$64,000. though only opened weekends during October 2015, doubling the previous year.

Team Recommendations: Write a script, layout a route, hire some talented tour guides/ storytellers and design a ghost tour. The Old Washington County Jail and Museum is well known for a tradition of being haunted. Check out the following ghost tours: Roswell Ga, Ghost Tours <http://roswellghosttour.com> and Athens Ghost Tours: <http://www.visitathensga.com/includes/events/index.cfm?eventid=11240>



Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Tennille: A Great Place to Watch Trains

Tennille has been a classic railroad town since the Central of Georgia Railroad routed there instead of Sandersville in the 1840s. The town grew around the railroad, which was stop number 13 on the busy road from Savannah to Atlanta. In 1876, Sandersville formed the Sandersville and Tennille Railroad Company and in 1904 the City of Sandersville began the Sandersville Railroad. Today train watching is a popular and growing hobby and a great activity to attract families to Tennille.

Recommendation – Tennille is an ideal location for a train view platform with 11 Trains traveling through town in a day. There are currently 5 train watching platforms in Georgia. The most well-known, the Folkston Funnel, brings visitors from around the country who stay in the refurbished train car lodging, eat at the restaurants, shop at the stores, and sit under the covered platform with binoculars keeping track of the passing locomotives.

The Folkston Funnel:

<http://railfanlocations.tripod.com/folkston-ga.html>



Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Team Recommendations

- Join a Civil War specific marketing organization that promotes events through the southeast. Tri-State Civil War Association <http://civilwarsouth.org/>
- Open a permanent exhibit that covers the importance of Kaolin to Washington County and Sandersville
- Actively promote the architecture of Charles Choate and consider an audio tour for the large concentration of Choate buildings in your county. An example is Architectural City Tours <http://www.architecturalcitytours.com/>
- Create an audio tour that tells the stories of the Civil War art exhibit at the Brown House. Bring the stories to life by connecting visitors with the sights so they can experience where the events occurred.
- Survey the large number of African American sites including churches, schools, homes, businesses, cemeteries and sites related to famous former residents. Construct themed driving tours of these wonderful resources. Use the T.J. Elder School as a trail head for the driving tours.
- Promote African American genealogy. <https://familysearch.org/african-american-genealogy> and host family reunions. <http://reunions.afrigeneas.com/>
- Take advantage of Georgia's Camera Ready program. <http://www.georgia.org/industries/entertainment/georgia-film-tv-production/>
- Collect images from around Washington County to load to the state's photo data base <http://georgia.org/reel-crew>
- Take advantage of the Old Washington County Jail and Museum tradition of being a haunted location. Have a ghost tour during the Halloween period centered there or where appropriate. <http://roswellghosttour.com>
- Build a train watching platform for Tennille and promote the hobby of train watching there as is done in Folkston and four other communities around the state. <http://railfanlocations.tripod.com/folkston-ga.html>

Marketing



Marketing and Public Relations

What is Marketing?

From Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

“The action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.”

The action or business – Good marketing is about CONSTANT action. In the world of tourism marketing, if you slow down and stop your action at any moment, you will be left behind in the dust of visitors going to other destinations.

promoting and selling – Marketing consists of pushing information across hundreds of different types of media channels. This report will help Washington County identify the key channels for distributing your message. As the communities and county grow the tourism reach, the community will slowly add new and diversified channels to expand markets.

products or services – This includes EVERY reason a visitor would come to Washington County, from government owned and managed attractions to private businesses supporting the industry.

including market research – Market research is the KEY to successful marketing that results in a return on investment. For large communities, this consists of market studies to identify the key markets, media and platforms for success. For smaller communities such as Washington County, market research relies on material from the state as well as other tourism partners and resources. Market research can also be as simple as picking up the phone and asking an tourism professional for their professional experience and opinion.

and advertising. – The key to effective advertising is utilizing the market research. Rule #1 – You’ll never advertise within Washington County... The reason is simple, your visitors don’t live in Washington County!

Marketing and Public Relations



Structure & Responsibility

Who markets Washington County?

All community organizations, hotels and attractions are ultimately responsible for marketing the community; however, the Washington County Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority has served as the lead organization and face of tourism marketing and development within the community. **The team recommends that the community establish a designated destination marketing organization with a full-time staff to manage the tourism brand, marketing and product development.**

The Annual Review of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee reinforces this recommendation:

“The committee recommends in the near future for a tourism professional to be hired either by the county or the City of Sandersville or some other entity. A trained professional will know and understand exactly what is needed to promote our outdoor and historical tourism in Washington County and beyond. This would be his or her sole official job. It is time to move the tourism initiatives beyond what volunteers can do with their limited time and knowledge.”

Refer to the Georgia Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus for assistance in establishing and structuring a new tourism office / convention & visitor bureau in Georgia. They can provide average salary range for positions, sample budgets, and other crucial developmental information.

Georgia Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus
Julie Musselman, Executive Director 912-897-6339 | jmusselman@gacvb.com

Marketing and Public Relations

Hotel / Motel Tax

Georgia State Code 48-13-51(a) (1) (A)

Local governments may levy and collect an excise tax upon the furnishing for value to the public of any room or rooms, lodgings, or accommodations furnished by any person or legal entity licensed by, or required to pay business or occupation taxes to, the municipality for operating a hotel, motel, inn, lodge, tourist camp, tourist cabin, campground, or any other place in which rooms, lodgings, or accommodations are regularly furnished for value.

Generally the restricted portion of tax revenue must be used for: **Promoting, attracting, stimulating, and developing conventions and tourism**

Recommendation:

The City of Sandersville is currently collecting 3% tax on all hotel / motel rooms. The best usage of hotel / motel tax is reinvestment into the development of destination tourism through strategic marketing of the community.

The team recommends that the city fully examine the current usage of hotel / motel tax to understand if it is fully marketing the city and delivering a return on investing through new spending in hotels, restaurants, attractions and other businesses.

More Information:

<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/development/research/programs/hotelmoteltax.asp>

Marketing and Public Relations

What is Marketing?

Marketing can be...

- Traditional Print Advertising
- Internet Advertising
- Brochures
- Mobile Promotions
- A Facebook page, a Twitter Account, a YouTube Video.
- Press releases
- Promotional Events
- Traveling Displays
- Regional Partnerships
- Relationships
- Travel Shows

BUT, destination marketing is different in EVERY community. The marketing plan for Augusta, Georgia will look completely different from the marketing plan for Washington County.

Every community is different and very visitor travels for different reasons. Therefore, marketing **YOUR** community is a very different experience than every other destination in the State.



Marketing and Public Relations

Develop Your Tourism Plan...

It is your business to persuade potential tourists, residents, and outside businesses that your town is unique--or has a differential advantage from every other community in Georgia.

To be successful, tourism must be locally driven. A tourism plan should create an incentive for broad local involvement so that the end result accurately reflects your community's culture, heritage, values and goals.

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, an effective tourism plan should incorporate the following five principles:

- Find the Right Fit –Define Your Purpose
- Tell Your Own Story –Focus on Authenticity and Quality
- Preserve and Protect Your Resources –Foster a Preservation Ethic
- Make Tourism Sites Come Alive –Tell a Story
- Collaborate with Partners –Form Alliance



Marketing

Submarkets of Tourism

Cultural – Visitors are interested in local traditions, food and wine, arts, theatre, music

Adventure – Active participation activities such as zip lining, hiking, horseback riding, cycling

Natural – Includes environmental tourism, ecotourism, and nature tourism.

Heritage – Visitors looking to discover stories of the past and walk where legends walked.

Agritourism – Tourism in which tourists visit active farms and experience agriculture personally.

Sports – Whether a participant or spectator, sports tourism is an industry bringing regional, state and national visitors of all ages to communities.

Leisure – Travelers looking for a getaway and something different, not necessarily traveling with a schedule, open to new discoveries.

Business – Usually weekday travel, working during the day, but looking for leisure activities in the evening.

Educational – Friends and family visit students; university events may bring in out-of-town visitors.

Snowbirds – Northerners traveling to Florida beach destinations who spend time experiencing Georgia during travel to-and-from their final destination

Step #1 - Is Your Product Market Ready?

Market Ready = A product that is ready to accept visitors and portray the brand

AN IMPORTANT PART OF TOURISM MARKET READINESS IS CLEARLY UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU OFFER AND HOW IT DIFFERS FROM THE COMPETITION, AS WELL AS HOW YOU MAY WANT TO DIVERSIFY BASED UPON THE CONSTRAINTS OF YOUR FACILITY AND RESOURCES. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT PRODUCT OR SERVICE OFFERING?

Do you currently offer products/programs/services at your site?

Do you currently set business goals and have a method of tracking success and customer satisfaction with the products/programs/services offered? How? How often?

Does your product/service offer a quality experience to visitors? How do you know?

Does your product/service offer something unique? What is it and how do you know it is unique?

Is your product/service recognized locally, regionally, nationally, internationally?

Do you update existing products/programs/services and develop new offerings? How frequently and what drives these updates/new developments?

Are you aware of who your competition is, how they operate and their unique advantages?

Have you worked collaboratively with other product partners in your area?

Are you looking for opportunities to develop additional products, programs or services? Why

Marketing

Step #2 – Identify Your Brand

Branding is *NOT* your logo.

Your brand is what people *experience* in your community. It's about consistently meeting expectations.

You can't do that with a logo. A logo merely reinforces the brand! The first step of branding is to understand and agree on your community's core identity.

- Narrow your assets list with your partners and stakeholders in your assessment. Include as many community members as possible.
- Remember, your community's unique history and historic resources are tremendous assets.
- Once you have identified your top 4-6 assets, you will need to identify the most important, or key asset. This will be the “engine” that drives your community development strategy. From this key asset, you will develop your brand.

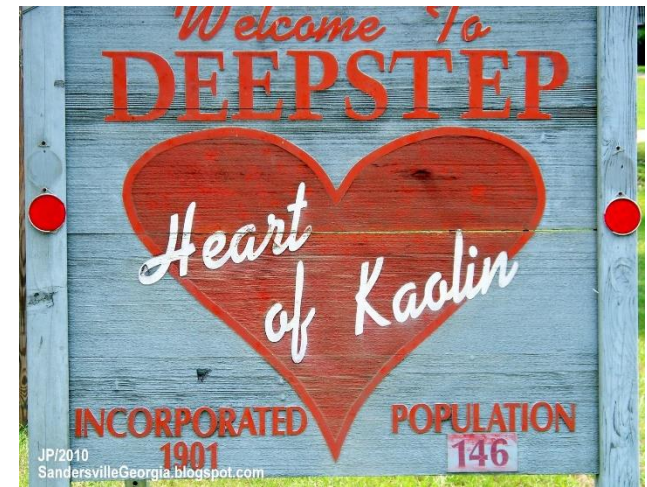


Marketing

What is our brand?

A brand represents the spirit and culture of a community. Sample strong brands from other Georgia communities:

- Albany, Georgia – Where History and Nature Flow
- Blairsville, Georgia – Each Season Something New
- Cartersville, Georgia – Georgia's Land of Cowboys, Indians & Southern Legends
- Dahlonega, Georgia – It's Pure Gold
- Lincoln County – Georgia's Freshwater Coast
- Milledgeville, Georgia – Capitals, Columns and Culture
- Monroe County, Georgia – Targets, Trails and Fried Green Tomatoes
- Rome, Georgia – Where the Rivers Meet and the Mountains Begin
- Vidalia, Georgia – Full of Local Flavor



Example: Monroe County, Georgia.

Monroe County is home to Juliette, filming location of Fried Green Tomatoes. With this unique location as the focus of their marketing, this business serves as the 'hook' for the community. Visitors travel to Monroe to experience the Whistle Stop Café (the filming location) and its surrounding lure, but the result is money spent throughout the community at all business. The unique hook lands the business, but the business is shared by the entire community.

Recommendation: Identify a tagline that peaks a tourists interests to begin creating the brand for your community.



Marketing

Step #3 Visual Identity

Once a firm, solid brand is determined and vested by all community members involved with the tourism industry, a community wide logo can be constructed to represent the brand.

Remember, the brand = the spirit of the tourism community. The logo is simply a visual identity of that brand.

The marketing concept should present a UNIFIED IMAGE COUNTY-WIDE, using the same TAG LINE (catchy phrase), the same general graphic design and coloration, and the same fonts.

Once implemented, your visual identity should be consistent across all platforms – from visitor guides and brochures to social media and online ads.

How to Create:

- Many Georgia companies offer creative design services to tourism organizations and communities – GDEcD can provide a list of recommended companies
- Many universities offer creative design as student work projects – Explore a partnership with Augusta State University for a low-to-no-cost visual identity / logo



Marketing

Step #4-Basic Collateral

The simplest and most bang-for-your-buck method with which to begin is with the development of collateral, which is a marketing term for print materials.

A rack card is a two-side collateral piece with a clear message on the top 1/3 of the card, printed on stiff paper, with strong visual images and bi-focal friendly font. FIRST – your attraction/community name and location, THEN your visual images.

A brochure is usually a trifold (one piece of paper printed on both sides and folded into thirds). It can be printed on matte or glossy paper. The front cover is the most important, and the top 1/3 of the front cover is even more important. Professional brochures measure 9x4 inches and can be produced at minimal cost.

STRONG EXAMPLES

- Visit Milledgeville
- Monroe County Georgia
- Cartersville/Adairsville Georgia



Marketing

Routes for Creating Basic Collateral

County-Wide Brochure - Many counties develop a county-wide brochure and share the expense among the participating communities. Funding can come from county funds, hotel/motel tax, individual city governments, or a full co-op.

- A co-op brochure is funded by each listing attraction or community splitting the cost of the brochure production and printing. Costs can be split evenly or be based on the amount of space that each organization requires for their listing.

Community-Based Brochures – Each individual community produces collateral for their individual city's attraction. This route is not recommended for Washington County due to the limited size and small number of attractions in each community.

Theme-Based Brochures – Individual segments of the tourism industry in Meriwether can come together to produced themed brochures promoting their sub-market to visitors. Examples include a rack card pushing only the historical attractions or a brochure promoting the outdoor activities throughout the region of Washington County.

Recommendation: Update current collateral and evaluate the need for new promotional materials



Marketing

Step #5-Internal Education

Educating Your Fellow Citizens on the Impact of Tourism When the term “tourism” is mentioned, many people express the opinion that they don’t want it in their hometown. Many people are unaware of the positive economic and social benefits that an active tourism economy can provide in a local market.

Local media coverage: Take every opportunity available in the local media to spread the good word of the positive impact of tourism on Washington County.

Tourism Speakers Bureau: A “tourism” representative needs to speak to every community organization multiple times per year with an update on development.

Preaching the success stories to citizens: A newsletter touting all that is happening in tourism should be developed and distributed monthly to every business in the county – from major attractions to small gas stations. Consider sending an email alert to local businesses and attractions each time you have a group tour bus, event or other large group of visitors in town to have ambassadors ready and smiles turned on!

Recommendation: Cultivate Citizen Tourism Ambassadors, Honor Local Ambassadors, Implement Be a Tourist in Your Hometown Program.

Marketing

Step #6 - Regionalism

Regional Partnerships One of the most important steps for Washington County is expanding the reach of the tourism plan beyond the basic county lines. When visitors come to Georgia, they are not aware of county, city or governmental lines – they are simply traveling to a region to explore authentic Georgia. A regional approach is the most effective and important method for marketing tourism because it presents tourism in a manner most effective to travelling.

Classic South Travel Association Networking is a key element in marketing your tourism product. The relationships that you develop with other people who work in the industry are vital to the success of your marketing plan. The Classic South Travel Association (CSTA) is an independent 501(c)3 organization that is made up of tourism partners throughout the 17 counties of East Central Georgia. This gives you an opportunity to meet other people who work in the industry, learn what they are doing to market their product, and how you can partner and co-op with them to enhance your marketing efforts.



Recommendation: Continue to attend CSTA meetings; invite others to join. Participate in co-op advertising opportunities. Build relationships and network across the region and surrounding communities in order to find ways to cross-promote. Offer discounts or restaurant vouchers when there are large events in other communities and you know people will be traveling through your community.

Marketing

Step #7 – Advertising and Public Relations

Who's the target market?

Research conducted by GDEcD and the US Travel Association indicated that the target market for the majority of Georgia destinations is 25-55 year-old women in the Southeastern United States. These women are planning trips for the entire family, including grandparents or grandchildren.

Market Research

Market research is the process of determining what messages should be told and to what individuals they should be told to in order to recruit new business clients. Many free resources exist for Georgia Tourism Partners in order to effectively reach new visitors.

Free resources provided by the Georgia Department of Economic Development:

- Visitor Volume and Demographic Reports
- Smith Travel Research Hotel Lodging Reports
- Tourism Satellite Reports
- VISA VUE International Spending Reports

Georgia Tourism Research: Andria Godfrey, Director of Research
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Marketing

Step #7 – Advertising and Public Relations

Public Relations *With little to no funds, Public Relations is the #1 tool for marketing your community.*

Press Releases Traditional editorial coverage of a travel will always be the #1 reason visitors travel to your area. One press release that you write and send to the media can generate more visitors and return on investment than your entire marketing budget. Building relationships with local, state and regional media is one of the best methods of gaining free press coverage of your tourism destination

Media Kit & Online Media Room Every community should have an established press kit (also known as a media profile sheet) prepared at all times to respond to requests from interested media.

An effective media kit is only 2-pages, front and back (When GDEcD promotes media kits from around the state, each county is limited to only 2 pages). An effective tourism media kit provides inspiration for writers; a media kit does not need to provide every detail a writer needs, just the inspiration to seek out additional information from a provided link. Links should direct writers to full information on the attraction, story idea or other information within the online media room within your website.

Online Media Room Online media rooms provide full information on all the story ideas you provided in your media kit. Additionally, it should include itinerary suggestions and full contact information for community media contacts. Full contact information is an email, work phone and cell phone – media under deadlines do not have time to fill out a contact form and wait for you to leisurely return their message. You get them the information they need ASAP or you won't be included in their article. Example: LaGrange, GA - <http://www.lrc-media.com/media-room-network/media-rooms/lagrange-ga/>.

Recommendation: Create a media kit or profile sheet with story ideas for media. Create an online media room to develop travel media market.

Marketing

Step #8: WashingtonCountyGA.com

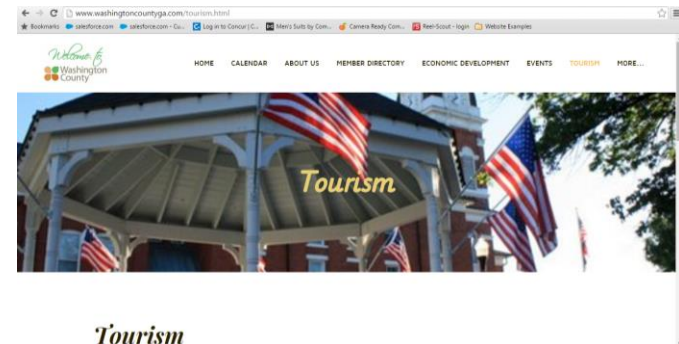
Washing County Tourism should begin a full evaluation of the effectiveness of the WashingtonCountyGA.Com website. Web analytics should be used to determine if the website is meeting the goals of driving new visitors. If web analytics are currently not be used, Google Analytics can be installed for free and show the following information:

- Impressions
- Unique Visitors
- Pages viewed per visit
- Time Spent on Site
- Viewer information including location, certain demographics, etc.
- Source of viewer (what website linked them to your website)

In considering the effectiveness of WashingtonCountyGA.com, the following questions should be asked:

- Does our website embody the brand and visual image of Meriwether?
- Is our website easy to use for all demographics visiting our website, age 20-60? Both tech skilled and unskilled?
- Is our website visually appealing and focused on visually stimulating images?

Recommendation: Evaluate the effectiveness of your website and redesign to meet the needs of all visitors across a variety of demographics.



Marketing

Step #8: WashingtonCountyGA.com

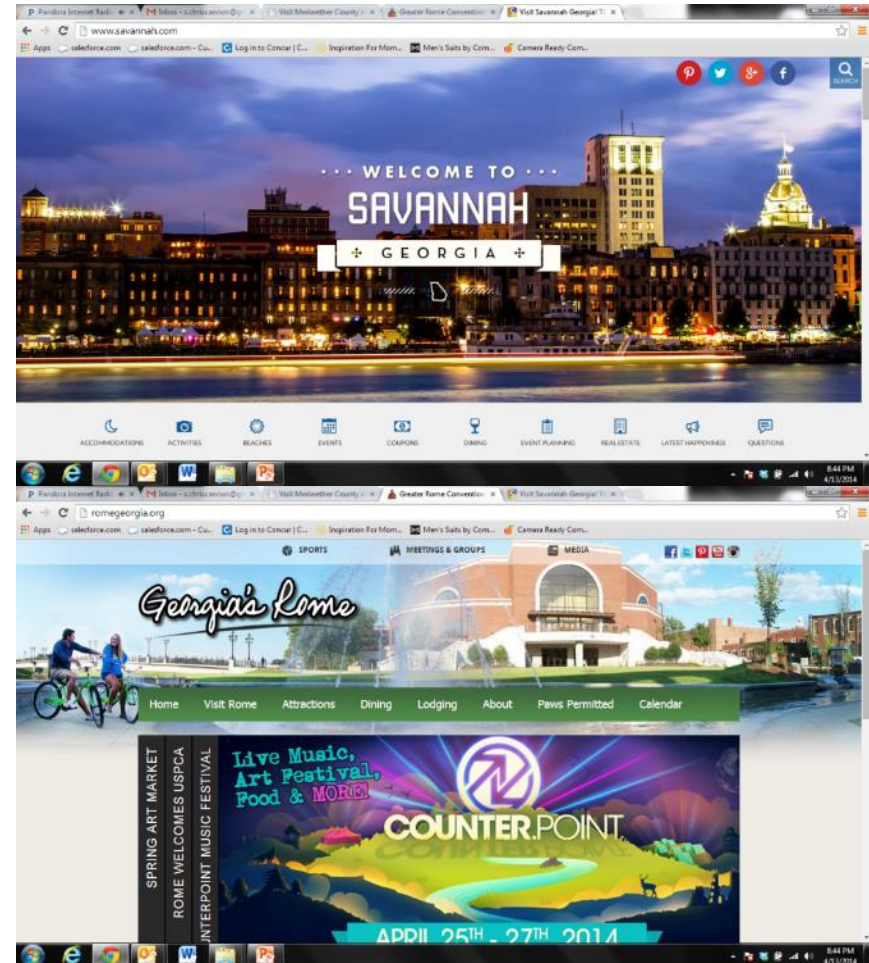
Quality Content

- Does our website contain quality, easy-to-navigate information?
- Does the website contain information for all the sub-markets of travel and tourism?
 - Leisure travelers (historical, eco-tourism, Agritourism)
 - Group travel (motor coach itineraries)
 - Travel media (Media & Press Room with story ideas)
 - Calendar of Events with all local events appealing to tourists?

The Best Tourism Websites

The following websites are strong examples of visually appealing websites with quality content:

- Savannah - <http://www.visitsavannah.com/>
- Rome - <http://romegeorgia.org/>
- Cobb County - <http://www.travelcobb.org/>
- Macon - <http://www.maconga.org/>
- Blue Ridge - <http://www.blueridgemountains.com/>



Marketing

Step #8: WashingtonCountyGA.com

What to include on your website:

Informational Listings on all attractions, lodging, and restaurants:

- Name
- Description
- Address
- Phone
- Website
- Email
- Description
- Days and Hours
- Social Media Links

Examples of quality listings:

Restaurant: <http://romegeorgia.org/dining/harvest-moon-cafe/>

Attraction: <http://romegeorgia.org/attraction/oak-hill-the-martha-berry-museum/>

What to include on your website:

- Group Tour Information
 - Itineraries
 - Direct contact information for group tour assistance
- Meeting, Sports and Family Reunion Information
 - Meeting Spaces
 - Sports Facilities (Ball Fields)
 - Family Reunion spaces and resources
 - Caterers, activities and etc. for families
- Media Room Press Releases
 - Story Ideas
 - Information on major attractions
 - Contact information for a media coordinator
- Calendar of Events
 - Include ALL events that could have a potential draw to visitors
 - For many tourism marketing organizations, this is the most high traffic area of the website!

*Important – When including contact information on your website, DO NOT simply give a form for potential media and business to submit. Include a Name, Phone Number and Email for a primary coordinator in each of these areas! Make contacting you as easy as picking up the phone!

MARKETING

Marketing and Packaging Businesses and Events

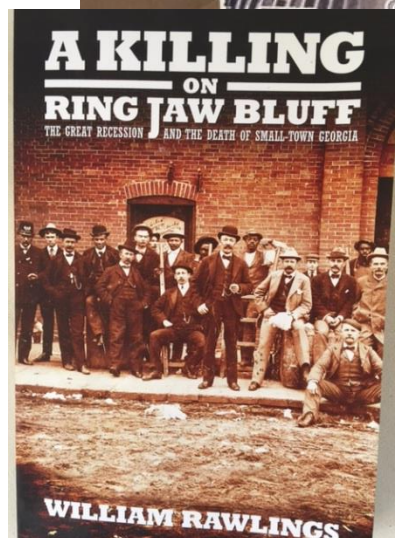
Tourism & Downtown Businesses need to cross promote each other and partner with area lodging. See: www.opportunityguy.com for packaging ideas.

Plan 2 or 3 day itineraries with lodging, dining, shopping, visiting farms and highlighting local Georgia Grown & Made items.

Target market ideas:

- History Buffs
- Writers, Artists, & Plays (Your own Swamp Gravy)
- Choate Architecture Tours "Roads" Scholars & students
- Motown & Local Music Scene
- Hunting, Fishing, Bird Watching & River Adventures
- Science & Agriculture, Kaolin & Cotton & Kids (4-H)
- Family Genealogy
- The March to the Sea re-enactors (Living History)
- School Reunions
- Bicycle & Biker Back Roads Rambles
- Train Watchers - Bring back the Nancy Hank Excursion

Check out the following link for ideas relating to supporting local Businesses: The 3/50 Project: <http://www.the350project.net/home.html>
Small Business Development Centers--www.georgiasbdc.org



Marketing

Step #9 – Social Media

Should I be a social guru? Yes, BUT only if you have the proper amount of time to devote to managing a social media account. The only thing worse than NOT being on social media, is BEING on social media and NOT MANAGING your accounts. If you can't commit to running them properly, social media can only hurt.

What social networks should we be on?

1. Facebook is the most recommended social network for beginners in travel and tourism.
 - The fastest growing and most interactive demographic on Facebook is women Age 35-65. The #1 market for planning family vacations in Georgia is women age 35-55. The demographics make this the perfect social network for Washington County.
 - Washington County should create a social media page (NOT profile or group) based on the group's brand and visual identity.
 - Posts should be made 5-7 times per week. Posts should be short, 1-2 sentences, and promote an attraction, event or special site that is MARKET-READY. Posts should be made from a professional voice and include a high-quality professional photo.

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

Marketing

Step #9 – Social Media

- **What other Facebook pages should I engage?**

- Explore Georgia – The Official Social Media arm of GDEcD. Your events and posts can be promoted to bring exposure and expansion to your pages.
- Classic South – Regional Travel Association Facebook Page

- **What other social media should Washington County be active on?**

- Currently, the resource team recommends that Washington County does not consider any other social media besides Facebook. Once Facebook is successful for at least one year and proving a ROI, other social media can be considered under the advice of the GDEcD social media expert.

- **Supervise and Maintain TripAdvisor:**

- Nearly all of your hotels, restaurants, attractions and some other sites are already listed on TripAdvisor. Designate one person to respond to comments whether positive or negative.

- **Seek expert help from Georgia Tourism**

- To reach users on other social media platforms, work with Katie Christof and Parker Whidby of GDEcD to engage users on the 13 networks that ExploreGeorgia currently manages.

- Contact Information:

Katie Christof, Senior Digital Media Strategist

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Phone: 404-962-4051

Parker Whidby, Digital Content Specialist

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Recommendation *Engage on your Facebook page and engage with social media team at GDEcD.

Marketing

Step #10 - ExploreGeorgia

Overview of ExploreGeorgia.org

- Consumer website for Georgia Visitors
- ALL Georgia Attractions, Hotels, Visitor Centers, Trails, Parks, Tourism Entities, and EVENTS can be listed for FREE
- Content for e-newsletters, marketing campaigns, social media, and all promotions is gathered from ExploreGeorgia. To be included in any campaign, your updated information must be on ExploreGeorgia
- 3.9 Million unique people visited ExploreGeorgia in 2015 with over 500 million total impressions throughout the site
- Login Information available from
 - Vickie Sanders, Interactive Manager, Explore Georgia vsanders@Georgia.org



Recommendation: Make sure all events, hotels, and attractions are listed on ExploreGeorgia and are up to date. Be sure to include special offers!

Marketing

Step #11 – Local Visitor Center Strategy

The Gateway to Your Community The Visitor Center is the gateway for visitors. The Visitor Center is your official “Welcome” to all visitors to your area. A Visitor Center should be **easily located with directional signage** that makes finding this facility “idiot-proof.” Ample parking, accessibility, public rest rooms, friendly helpful staff and thorough displays and information about the area are all critical components of a Visitor Center. The visitor center needs to function as a staging area for visitors and as an orientation for all the unique and wonderful things to see and do in all of Washington County.

Because of the vast geographical area of Washington County, one visitor center in Sandersville cannot sufficiently service the entire county. Satellite visitor centers should be considered for the other communities. These can be housed in the lobby of public facilities (state park, city halls, libraries, etc.). More ideally, the communities can install outdoor visitor kiosks in each community that provide maps, visitor guides, and brochures 24/7.

All visitor centers and kiosks should have strong visual signage and directional signage on the gateway entrances to each community.

Recommendation: Create strong signage to visitor center and continue establishing kiosks for information around the county.



Marketing

Step #11 – State Visitor Center Strategy

Utilizing Free and Low-Cost Opportunities Provided by the State of Georgia

The #1 best FREE marketing opportunity for Georgia communities is building strong relationships with the 11 Georgia Visitor Information Centers (VICs). A strong relationship with the front line personnel of the Georgia VICs will have a strong return on investment by directing visitors directly to your community.

Recommendations:

1. Put up a new display in the Augusta VIC, the closest state visitor center to Washington County.
2. Participate in the 11 Georgia VIC Georgia On My Mind Days – this free show is scheduled April – October at each Georgia center.
3. Participate in the advertising opportunities at the Augusta VIC or the Featured Partner Program.
4. Participate in Agriculture Week at the Augusta VIC This is a week to promote GA Made GA Grown products throughout the State of Georgia. This is a FREE marketing opportunity to Agriculture partners in your area.
5. Host VIC Staff from across the state on yearly familiarization tours of your county to showcase new products and expose your communities to new staff members



Marketing

Step #12 – Regional Trails

Regional Connections – Tourism Trails

Tourism driving tour trails are regional connections tied together with a common theme. These trails span a variety of distances with some as small as a two county area and others as large as a forty county area. Tourism trails are effective at increasing visitor spending because they encourage visitors to spend more time in a particular community or region as they travel from location to location, increasing total room nights and overall expenditures.

Examples of strong Georgia trails:

- North Georgia Farm Trail - <http://www.gafarmtrail.com/>
- Georgia Antebellum Trail - <http://www.antebellumtrail.org/>
- Georgia Blue and Gray Trail - <http://www.georgiabluGRAYtrail.org/>
- Georgia Grown Trail: Highway 37 - <http://georgiagrowntrail37.com/>

Recommendation: Continue to lead the regional development of the Highway 15 Trail across Georgia and explore new themed trails which Sandersville can position itself as an anchor within Classic South.

Marketing

Summary

Remember marketing is not about your business, it's about your customer!

- Do your research....who is coming, why, and what do they want to see?
- Know the power of repetition. Be sure your message is consistent.
- Get Creative...a picture is worth a 1,000 words; make sure your image is inviting to your customer.
- Your plan should not sit on the shelf....it is a plan of work. Set goals and timelines to achieve these goals.
- Don't neglect or ignore your current visitors while pursuing new ones.



**Keep Your Eyes on the Prize:
New pennies in the pockets of
Washington County!**



Conclusion



Product Development Pointers

- Focus on your strengths - base your product on what natural and cultural resources you have that others don't have.
- Plan all stages of the project in detail before commencing, including marketing, product evaluation and redevelopment. Plan for and monitor budgets tightly.
- Be very clear about what you want to achieve - profit, local employment, community pride and involvement, and conservation of the resource.
- Consult and involve the local community.
- Take the time to do the project well. Do not rush the stages of consultation and product development. Innovation does not happen overnight.
- Know your target audience. Plan and tailor the product from the consumer's needs and perspectives. Undertake market research.
- Interpretation should be fun, encourage involvement, stimulate the senses, and pose a challenge. Plan all activities to reflect a strong theme.
- Choose methods that involve and engage the senses. Face to face interpretation is the most effective.
- Be cautious with technology. Can you afford it and do you need it?
- Collaborate with experts. Expertise may be found within your local community.
- Train the interpretative team to ensure consistency of product and messages.

Team Members



The Tourism Resource Team



Cindy Eidson

Cindy is the Director for Tourism Product Development with the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD). Cindy received a Master's of City Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Housing and Community Economic Development--- Family and Consumer Sciences from the University of Georgia and completed preservation studies in Historic Preservation from Georgia State University. Cindy is a former Manager for the Office of Downtown Development with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for almost 2 years; and also serving as Manager over Training and Special Projects with the Office of Downtown Development for 9 years as well as Better Hometown Program Coordinator for 4 years and as the Main Street Manager for both the City of Gainesville and Newnan Main Street Programs. With a total of 23 years of downtown planning experience, Cindy also worked as a Preservation Planner Intern with the Georgia Mountain RDC and 6 years with the University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service.

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Chris Cannon

Chris Cannon is the Assistant Director of Tourism Product Development for the Georgia Department of Economic Development. In this role, he shares his passion for tourism and helps communities across Georgia uncover, compose and share their unique stories through innovative tourism concepts.

Prior to working across the state, Cannon served as the Tourism Project Manager for the Presidential Pathways Region of Georgia – 20 counties in Central West Georgia. Before joining GDEcD, he was the Director of Communications for the Greater Rome Convention & Visitor Bureau in Northwest Georgia.

Cannon, a native of the mountains of Abingdon, Va., is a graduate of Shorter College in Rome with a degree in Media Studies and Art. Outside of work, he's nearly 60% complete on his quest to visit every historic courthouse in the 159 beautiful and unique counties of Georgia.

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The Tourism Resource Team



Tina Lilly

Tina Lilly serves as Grants Program Manager with Georgia Council for the Arts. In this position she manages grants and programs for single-discipline arts organizations as well as the Touring Artist Roster. Previously, she was Executive Director of the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center and Administrative Director for 7 Stages Theatre. Tina holds an MFA in Directing from The Theatre School at DePaul (formerly the Goodman School of Drama) and worked as an adjunct professor at The Theatre School as well as a freelance director while in Chicago.

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Barry L. Brown

Barry is the Heritage Tourism Specialist with the Georgia Department of Economic Development. He received his Master's in Heritage Preservation and Bachelor of Arts in History from Georgia State University. Barry worked with the Georgia Civil War Commission for six years and was involved in projects such as the acquisition of the Resaca Battlefield in Gordon County, Cascade/ Lionel Hampton Park acquisition in Fulton County, and the Wallis House acquisition and preservation of the Johnston's River Line in Cobb County. Barry began work with the Georgia Department of Economic Development in 2006 and is the coauthor of the popular guidebook *Crossroads of Conflict: A Guide to Civil War Sites in Georgia*. He served on the Stone Mountain Georgia Historic Preservation Commission 2006-2009. Barry also researched and edited the Georgia Civil War map for the Civil War Sesquicentennial, which is available online and in the state's Visitor Information Centers.

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The Tourism Resource Team



Caroline Figiel & Danny Jones

Caroline and Danny are partners in Creative Digital, Inc. Danny loves music and after majoring in music education, he went on to work with musicians such as The Tams, Atlanta Rhythm Section, America, and 38 Special. His projects range from co-creating the original songs on The Waffle House Jukebox and co-writing music for The National Democratic Presidential Convention to working on projects with “Rock Band”.

Caroline was born with Broadway in her blood. She has choreographed and performed in numerous theatrical presentations throughout the Southeast. Caroline has also shared the stage with national storytellers. With a MED in education, she has taught children and adults, and also has extensive experience teaching those with special needs. Together, they have formed an “edutainment” company that creates musical identities, audio tours, radio & TV spots, corporate songs, and web videos that promote, educate, market and entertain using many of today’s innovative technologies. Clients include Intercontinental Hotels, Ripley’s, Waffle House, Atlanta Office of Cultural Affairs, The Nashville Airport Authority, various Convention and Visitor Bureaus and Genband Communications.

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Anne Floyd

Anne is the Director of Local Government Services and Regional Historic Preservation Planner for the Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission. She has been with the CSRA for 28 years and has spent time in many communities assisting with preservation projects ranging from surveys to national register nominations and historic tax credit projects. Most recently Anne was involved with the Thomson RR Depot restoration and is assisting with the Hancock County RR Depot restoration, both funded with Transportation Enhancement grants and local funds. She has provided technical and grant assistance with historic buildings and cemeteries in nearly every county in the region. Presently, she is the chair of the Georgia Alliance for Preservation Commissions, 2015-2016.

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The Tourism Resource Team



Cindy Norton

Cindy Norton is the Agritourism Manager for the Georgia Department of Agriculture. In this position she manages the Agritourism signage program with the Department of Transportation, assists with the development of Agritourism sites and works with the Marketing Department to implement the Georgia Grown program. She has also worked with the creation of Agritourism Trails across the state and promoting agriculture education and local food products. Previously, she worked for the Department of Human Resources for 24 years and Cooperative Extension for 3 years. She has a degree in Speech Communication and Psychology from the University of Georgia.

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Jo Childers

Jo Childers has many years experience in downtown revitalization and community development. She was the first Main Street Manager for the City of Americus. The largest project undertaken during her tenure in-the-trenches as a Main Street Manager was the redevelopment of the 1892 Windsor Hotel in downtown Americus. She assisted with numerous Historic Preservation Tax Credit projects in Americus and developed early marketing initiatives for the Sumter County Chamber Tourism Division.

Jo developed and taught a Hotel and Restaurant Management Program as well as provided Customer Service Training for the Welfare to Work life skills classes at South Georgia Technical College. Jo has served various leadership roles in the Office of Downtown Development including Main Street program manager and State Coordinator for Georgia Main Street program working closely with the National Main Street Center.

Jo's current role is as Regional Manager with DCA and works with Regions 8 & 10 (30 counties) in west central and southwest GA. Jo provides technical and educational assistance to enhance local and regional leadership capacity working with various agencies and groups to encourage regional cooperation. She is the DCA liaison for River Valley Regional Commission and South Georgia Regional Commission. Jo was the first DCA employee to be awarded the Exceeding Excellence Award for Customer Service in 2007. She is a graduate of Bauder College.

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The Tourism Resource Team

Mandy M. Barnhart

Mandy is a graduate of Georgia College & State University with a degree in Marketing. She is a certified Tourism Marketing Professional (TMP) through the South Eastern Tourism Society, and is affiliated with several destination marketing organizations.

Mandy currently serves as the Regional Tourism Project Manager for the Classic South Travel Region, a division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development. Prior to working for the state of Georgia, Mandy spent six years in the hotel/hospitality industry. She has been with the State for 5 years.

Her responsibilities include working with communities, regional tourism organizations and non-profits across the region while partnering with other agencies to increase investment in and development of new tourism product. She works with communities and tourism products in the development of marketing plans and the promotion of existing attractions and events. Mandy is charged with increasing tourism expenditures in the region, thereby creating new jobs for Georgians.

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Keri Ogletree

Keri is the Manager of the Georgia Visitor Information Center, located at I-20 West at Georgia/South Carolina Line near Augusta, Georgia.

She received an Associates Degree in Early Childhood Education. Keri started with Industry, Trade, and Tourism in 2000 as a part time employee. At that time her job was to handle the over flow of the call center calls as well as fulfillment. She became a full time employee in 2004 and became Manager in 2008. Keri has completed her Southeastern Marketing College Program and is a certified Tourism Marketing Specialist.

Most recently she earned her certificate for the Georgia Leadership Course for Economic Development.

Keri Ogletree
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