

Tourism

SUMMARY

This Community Transformation Strategy focuses on developing your downtown's central business district as a regional or statewide tourist destination. Tourism should not focus solely on attractions. An ideal downtown district will offer diverse amenities, services, restaurants and retail industry to encourage visitors to stay or return. While marketing and advertising will play strongly into the success of this strategy, the development, maintenance and inclusivity of the existing built environment will be critical to the district's long-term vitality.

KEY DESCRIPTORS

Ability to serve tourists and to enhance tourism through the built environment, activities, niche industries, destination marketing, regionalism, attractions, assets, activities, heritage travelers, second home owners, outdoor enthusiasts, cultural tourism, brand identity, wayfinding, education, diversity, market analysis, service industry workers, hospitality, public and visitor amenities, authenticity, identity, cleanliness, safety and aesthetically pleasing.



You attract what you are, not what you want. If you want great, then be great.”

— *unknown*

PROS

- Tourists spend money.
- Tourism brings people to your community.
- Tourism can provide attractions for locals and visitors alike.
- This strategy can help to define and to solidify the community's identity.

CONS

- Locals can feel like a tourist in their own town.
- The seasonal nature of tourism can pose challenges.
- Tourism doesn't always equal more money in local business owners' pockets.
- Locals can feel overlooked in favor of tourists.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Overnight tourists require amenities beyond attractions.
- It is important to know your target audience.
- Make sure you cater to locals' needs and your local audience.
- Information needs to be readily available and accessible.
- The best tourism assets are the ones that are most authentic to your community.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Who is your target audience?
- What is your tourism draw?
- Do you have a natural tourism draw, or is this something you will need to create?
- What is there for tourist to do for three hours, one day or three days?
- Who are your community tourism partners?

Dahlonega, ExploreGeorgia.org



FOUR-POINT APPROACH ACTIVITIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Update businesses information on Google, Yelp and other online platforms to ensure its accuracy.
- Incentivize the development of niche and experiential businesses that support a tourism economy. For example, Covington’s “Vampire Diaries” Tours offers tours of places where this TV show was filmed downtown and in the greater Covington area.
- Develop a marketing assistance program grant for downtown businesses.
- Host small business development workshops to teach business owners how to market to tourists.
- Host a workshop for businesses to learn how to develop a user-friendly website, which supports Google analytics.
- Work with other communities in your area to develop regional tourism trails. i.e. Quilters Trail, Agricultural Trails, Civil Rights Trail.

DESIGN

- Ensure you address public needs downtown: restrooms, water filling stations, electrical outlets, and car charging stations.
- Install comprehensive wayfinding signage for businesses and to direct visitors to local tourism draws.
- Consider how to address alternative transportation needs (i.e. bikes, trolleys, pedestrians and ride share programs).
- Provide pet-friendly amenities such as a dog park or dog sanitation station.
- Install information kiosks downtown and provide the information online.
- Host a walking audit to identify your downtown’s assets and weaknesses.

PROMOTIONS

- Work with community partners to offer an online event based community calendar.
- Work with partners to post accurate and up-to-date information online and in printed materials.
- Utilize unique hashtags that encompass tourism initiatives.
- Develop selfie stops to encourage visitors to engage with downtown sites and to share online.
- Develop a visitor coupon program and work with partners to distribute.
- Develop a cohesive tourism brand identity. For example, Macon builds on its music heritage and utilizes events that draw in regional tourists.
- Use heritage tourism to engage local schools.
- Use a zip code capture program to see from whence your visitors are traveling.
- Install Google analytics on your website to see from whence your visitors are coming and for what they are searching.
- Offer free downtown wifi.

ORGANIZATION

- Consider your community’s parking needs.
- Adopt alcohol ordinances that support outside dining and open container districts.
- Develop an ambassador program.
- Develop event procedures to encourage organizations besides Main Street to host events downtown.
- Host a Department of Economic Development Tourism Product Development Team to identify your community’s assets.
- Offer an online survey to identify community assets and needs.
- Work with the local convention and visitors bureau or alternative destination marketing organization (DMO) to market downtown as a regional and statewide destination.
- Identify your ESRI tapestry segment(s).
- Adopt ordinances to address tourist-friendly lodging alternatives, such as Airbnb.
- Consider hotel-motel tax or the benefits from an increase to your current percentage rate.

PARTNERS

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Georgia Department of Economic Development

Small Business Development Center

Local convention and visitors bureau

State visitor information centers

Chamber of commerce

Power companies

Regional tourism partners

Local hoteliers

Local museums

Georgia State Parks and historic sites

Civic clubs

Tourism-oriented businesses

Performing arts centers

Universities