

## **Tourism Element**

### **Description of Tourism Element**

This element may include an inventory of tourism resources, current programs, and existing funding sources. This element could also include trends in tourism, potential funding opportunities, and partnership, projects and programs opportunities.

### **Background and Existing Condition**

“Tourism and travel is now one of the world’s largest industries and the world’s largest service industry, growing at an average annual rate of 4.5% worldwide. South Carolina has the people, the product, and the potential for so much more. The world just keeps getting flatter, and given the competition from other states and other countries, now is the time to move toward making South Carolina a truly competitive player in that most sustainable of economic arenas– tourism and hospitality. “ (Michael Mac Nulty, Executive Chairman -Tourism Development International)

According to the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) the following economic impact is currently created by the travel and tourism industry in South Carolina.

### **Economic Contribution of Tourism in South Carolina**

- ❑ Statewide, travel and tourism generates \$16.7 billion a year in total economic demand. <sup>(1)</sup>
- ❑ Over 10% of employment in the state is generated by travel and tourism. <sup>(1)</sup>
- ❑ State and Local Government Return on Investment (ROI): Over \$1.1 billion in state and local tax revenues are generated by travel and tourism. <sup>(1)</sup>
- ❑ About 30 million visitors come to South Carolina each year, including over 700,000 Canadians and about 150,000 overseas visitors. <sup>(2)</sup>
- ❑ Domestic visitors spent \$9.1 billion in SC in 2006, a 6.9% increase over 2005, following several years of healthy increases. <sup>(1)</sup>
- ❑ Twelve counties received over \$100 million in domestic travel expenditures in 2006: Horry (\$2,880 mil.), Charleston (\$1,460 mil.), Beaufort (\$960 mil.), Greenville (\$830 mil.), Richland (\$440 mil.), Lexington (\$420 mil.), Spartanburg (\$290 mil.), Georgetown (\$250 mil.), Florence (\$220 mil.), York (\$150 mil.), Anderson (\$130 mil.) and Orangeburg (\$100 mil.). <sup>(1)</sup>
- ❑ Thirteen counties have over 1,000 direct tourism jobs from domestic travel in 2006: Horry (37,900), Charleston (19,700), Beaufort (12,800), Greenville (9,400), Richland (5,900), Lexington (3,300), Georgetown (3,100), Florence (2,400), Spartanburg (2,300), York (1,900), Anderson (1,300), Orangeburg (1,300) and Colleton (1,000). <sup>(1)</sup>

## Tourism Industry Indicators, January – November 2007

- ❑ Hospitality & leisure employment is outperforming other sectors with 3.1% growth versus 1.1% growth for private sector employment overall in November 2007. (3)
- ❑ Gross sales are up 4.1% in the combined tourism-related sectors of accommodations, food services, arts/entertainment/recreation and auto rentals. (1)
- ❑ Accommodations tax collections are up 7.2%. Hotel room demand is up 1.4%, and hotel room revenue is up 7.9%. Recovery in room demand and continued room rate increases are keeping hotel revenues and taxes strong. (1)
- ❑ Admissions tax collections on ticketed events and recreational activities are up 5.4% compared to the same period in 2006. Golf generates over 40% of state admissions tax collections. (1)
- ❑ Air passenger deplanements are up 11.2%, which translates into 3.2 million air travelers thus far in 2007. These increases reflect double-digit growth at coastal airports with recently added air services: Charleston (Air Tran), Hilton Head (Delta) and Myrtle Beach (Spirit). (1)

(1) Travel Industry Association of America, Tourism Economic Impact Model and SC Tourism Satellite Account

(2) TNS Travels America, Statistics Canada and US Department of Commerce, Office of Travel and Tourism Industries

(3) South Carolina Workforce Trends, Employment Security Commission, Labor Market Information

## South Carolina Tourism Action Plan (SCTAP)

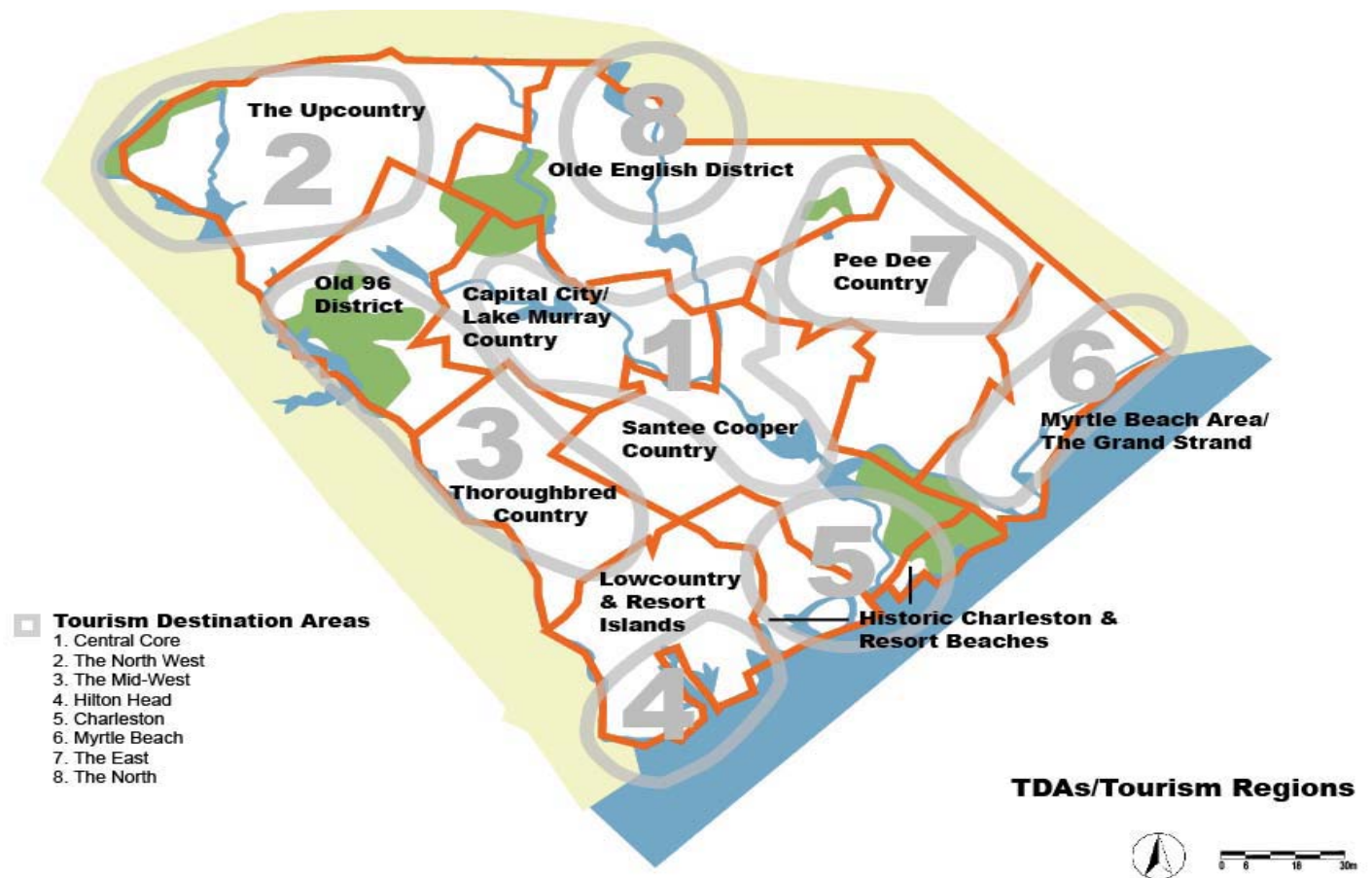
The South Carolina Tourism Action Plan is a massive three-volume plan developed by Tourism Development International (TDI). The Tourism Action Plan (TAP) consultancy assignment was contracted to TDI by the South Carolina Tourism Cluster Committee as part of the New Carolina Council on Competitiveness. The action plan is the result of seven months of research by a team who conducted more than 400 interviews and traveled across the state to evaluate the state's overall approach to tourism development. (South Carolina Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism)

The TAP was designed to achieve the goal identified by the Monitor Company Group in its 2004 study - of increasing gross tourism product per visitor - and, in so doing, to respond to the following challenges:

- ❑ To improve collaboration amongst industry & officials;
- ❑ To identify high spending potential tourist segments;
- ❑ To develop & package its tourism assets to attract the markets identified, and
- ❑ To execute an appropriate marketing strategy. (South Carolina TAP)

For planning and development purposes, the state is divided into ten Tourism Regions with eight Tourism Destination Areas (TDA's). Conway is located in the Myrtle Beach/The Grand Strand Tourism Destination Area. **Map T-1** shows these regions and areas. While Conway is in the Myrtle Beach/ The Grand Strand TDA the Conway area probably has more in common with the East TDA and parts of Georgetown County in terms of natural resources, town centers and historic buildings, farms and other tourism-related assets. Unfortunately, as shown below the TAP doesn't even recognize Conway as a key attraction or center for either area.

Map T-1: South Carolina Tourism Regions and Destination Areas



Source: SC Tourism Action Plan

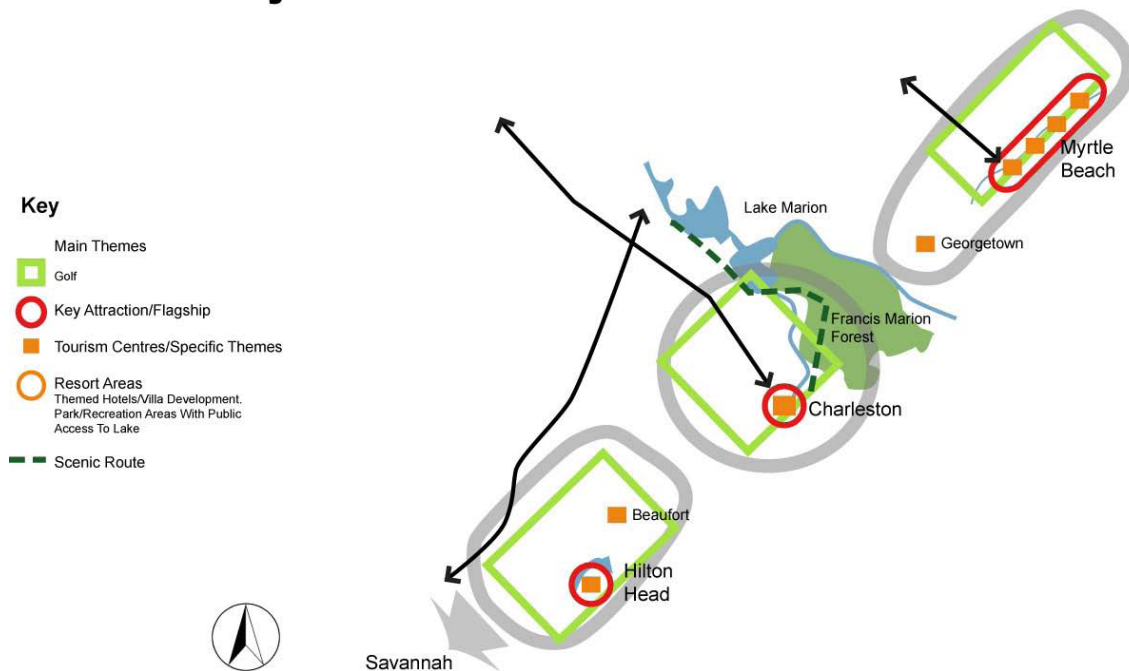
### Hilton Head/Charleston/Myrtle Beach (4,5,6)

The map below shows the Main Themes, Key Attractions/Flagships, Tourism Centers/Specific Themes, Resort Areas and Scenic Routes in the Hilton Head/Charleston/Myrtle Beach Tourism Development Area. The various projects and other needed actions are identified that are

needed to improve or create greater tourism attractions in the various locations. According to the TAP, the maps for the three coastal Tourism Development Areas are linked together as they share the necklace of coastal marinas and many other features. The total cost of projects for this area is \$ 228,000,000. (South Carolina TAP)

Map T – 2: Tourism Destination Areas – Hilton Head, Charleston, and Myrtle Beach

### **TDA 4, 5, 6: Hilton Head/ Charleston/Myrtle Beach**



Source: South Carolina Tourism Action Plan

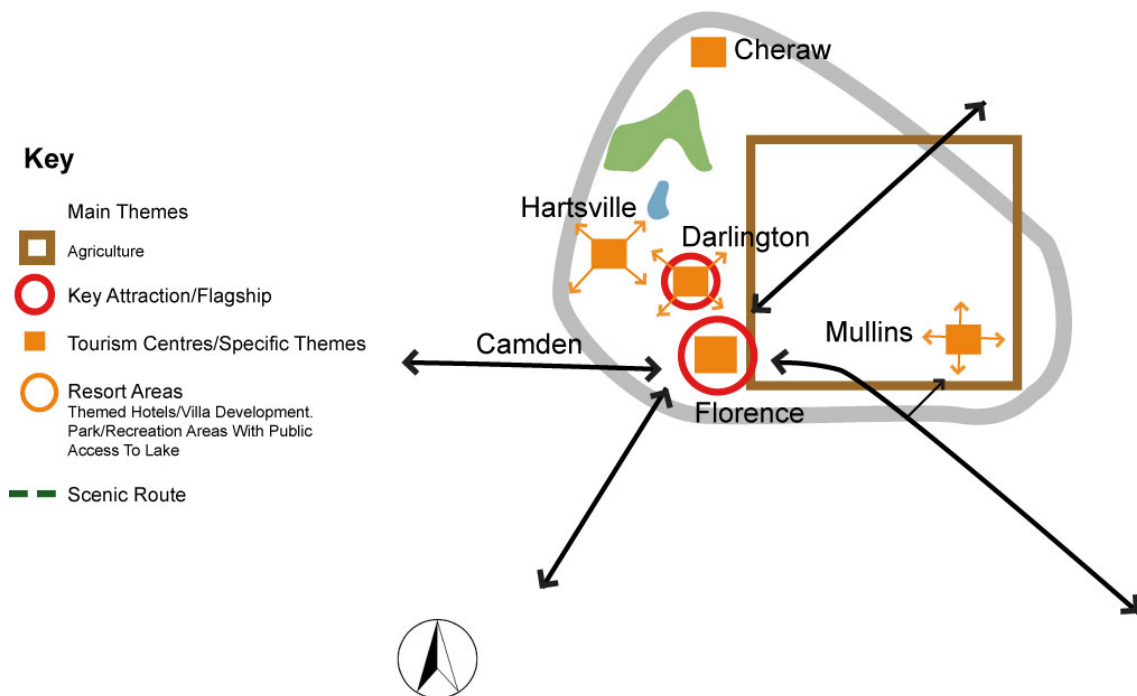
### **The East (7)**

“The East is essentially comprised of “quiet areas” showcasing country and country town life. Living, experiencing earlier rural farming and lifestyle for the enjoyment of both in state, out of state and international visitors with a continuation of the revolutionary war experience

from the Rock Hill area and majoring on the “Swamp Fox” - Francis Marion.” The total cost of projects proposed for this area is \$8,000,000. (South Carolina TAP)

Map T-3: Tourism Destination Area – The East

## TDA 7: The East



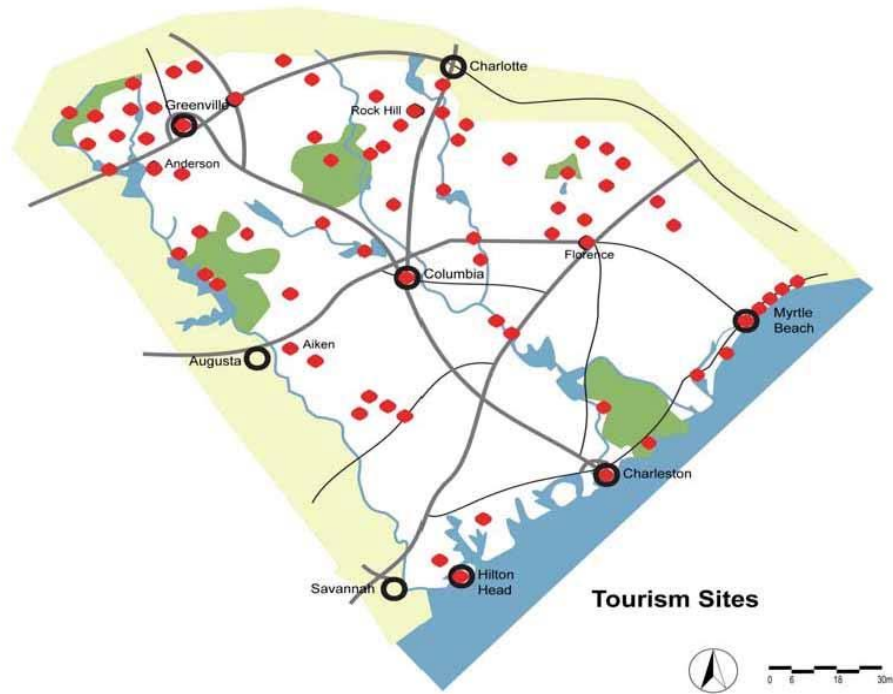
Source: SC Tourism Action Plan

## South Carolina Tourism Sites

According to the TAP the state does not currently enjoy a cohesive identity from a tourism perspective. It is in reality a group of administrative regions encompassing a diversity of destinations, which range from high-tech industrial cities to pristine nature environments, from city centers to quiet lakes. Rather than being a destination itself, the state is a collection of varied destinations, each with a separate identity and appealing to different markets. It is therefore important that these individual characteristics are recognized and promoted in the Tourism Action Plan. (South Carolina TAP)

A number of Tourism Sites (TS's) have been identified. TS's comprise significant natural and cultural heritage sites, areas of attractive landscape, and other attractions where activities take place and are key sites for tourism development. These TS's are shown on **Map T-4**. Conway was not identified on the statewide map as a tourism site.

Map T-4: Tourism Sites



Source: SC Tourism Action Plan

### Conway Profile in SC Tourism Action Plan



The SCTAP does include Conway in its Product and Facilities Audit shown below. The Audit scores Conway as high in significance, uniqueness and potential, average in condition and low in terms of interest in tourism development. The Audit says that there is a lack of awareness for Conway's tourism potential. Other negatives were restaurants hours on Sundays and the number of different brochures. On the positive side, quality restaurants, the Cypress Inn, the Riverwalk and Conway's live oak trees were highlighted in making Conway a "walkable community".

## South Carolina Tourism Action Plan

### Context:

<i>Region/Location/Site</i>	Conway, South Carolina
<i>Contact</i>	George Bullock – Cypress Inn
Person/position	Larry Biddle – Burroughs and Chapin
Ownership	Bill Strydesky – Art Exchange Project
Tel/Email	

### The Site:

<i>Description</i>		<b>Photos</b>
<p>A. Tourism Facilities/Services</p> <p>Things to do and see</p> <p>Shopping/restaurants</p> <p>Services</p> <p>Accommodations</p> <p>Car parking</p> <p>Public realm</p> <p>Sense of place</p> <p>B. Cultural Heritage</p> <p>Special features</p> <p>Architecture</p> <p>Handicraft</p> <p>Historic</p> <p>C. Natural Heritage</p> <p>Natural features</p> <p>Landscape</p> <p>Attractiveness</p> <p>Species, etc.</p> <p>D. Future Plans</p>	<p>Conway, A “Tree Town of USA” is famous for its live oak trees making it a very pleasant walking town; new river walk opens opportunity for boating and river cruises. Good railway between Conway and Myrtle Beach has also potential to develop a tourist access link to and from Myrtle Beach. New Artist Centre will be a tourism attraction.</p> <p>Poor sign position in Conway. Good inn and restaurants, but limited opening hours on Sundays of restaurants is not conducive to tourism generation.</p>	 

### Responsibility:

<p><i>Management</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ownership</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance</p>	Conway is not achieving its potential as a tourism destination. Low awareness of economic potential from tourism
<p><i>Promotion</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Itinerary/tours</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> budget</p>	Lots of brochures. One site has 4 different brochures produced by 4 different agencies

### Visitors:

<p><b>Who Visits</b></p> <p>Domestic</p> <p>Canada</p> <p>Europe</p> <p>Other</p>	Domestic, Including Myrtle Beach tourists
---	---

### Evaluation (1 poor - 5 excellent):

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Significance</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uniqueness</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Setting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Condition</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Interest</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Potential</p>	<p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>4</p>	Conway needs a development plan which would focus on product marketing and training if it is to reach its full potential.
--	---	---

Source: SC Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism – Tourism Action Plan

Conway should concentrate its tourism efforts on three programs or approaches to tourism development to capitalize on its assets. These programs are cultural heritage tourism, eco-tourism and agritourism. With our unique and scenic natural resources, historic buildings and preservation efforts, a thriving art community, a riverfront adjacent to downtown and a farming heritage these programs provide Conway the means to use and protect its assets while benefiting economically and improving our quality of life. All three of these programs complement and overlap each other creating abundant cross-promotional opportunities.

### **Heritage Tourism**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Heritage Tourism Program coordinated a three-year "Heritage Tourism Initiative" with funding from the National Endowment for Arts between 1990 and 1993. During that time, the Heritage Tourism Program worked with 16 pilot areas in four states (Indiana, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin) to see what it took to create heritage tourism programs that were both successful and sustainable. (National Trust for Historic Preservation ®)

This initiative resulted in the development of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's five guiding principles and four basic steps for getting started in cultural heritage tourism. Over the years, these principles and steps have been successfully used in cultural heritage tourism programs in rural and urban areas across America as well as abroad. (National Trust for Historic Preservation ®)

### **Five Guiding Principles:**

#### **Collaboration**

Much more can be accomplished by working together than by working alone. Successful cultural heritage tourism programs bring together partners who may not have worked together in the past.

#### **Find the Fit**

Balancing the needs of residents and visitors is important to ensure that cultural heritage tourism benefits everyone. It is important to understand the kind and amount of tourism that your community can handle.

#### **Make Sites and Programs Come Alive**

The human drama of history is what visitors want to discover, not just names and dates. Interpreting sites is important, and so is making the message creative and exciting. Find ways to engage as many of the visitor's five senses as you can, as the more visitors are involved, the more they will retain.

On average, visitors will remember:

10% of what they HEAR  
30% of what they READ  
50% of what they SEE  
90% of what they DO



### Focus on Quality and Authenticity

Quality is an essential ingredient for all cultural heritage tourism, and authenticity is critical whenever heritage or history is involved.

### Preserve and Protect

A community's, historic, natural and cultural resources are valuable and often irreplaceable. When your historic, natural and cultural assets are at the heart of your plans to develop tourism, it's essential to protect them for the long term. (National Trust for Historic Preservation ®)

### Heritage Tourism – Four Basic Steps



Source: National Trust for Historic Preservation ®

### Model Success Stories in Heritage Tourism

#### West Virginia's Tamarack



Tamarack is the nation's first statewide collection of handmade crafts, arts, and cuisine available in one location. It is 59,000 square feet of juried crafts, working art studios, a 178-seat theater, art gallery, and West Virginia foods. It represents the work of more than 1,900 artists and craftspeople, creating an inventory of more than 30,000 products. Tamarack products range from hand-made soap bars and honey-mustard sauces to hand-forged tables and

one-of-a-kind furniture—all produced by the people of West Virginia. Even the facility itself is West Virginia designed and built with native materials, down to the artisan-rendered wall sconces, stained-glass windows, and decorative counter tiles.

The collaboration required to maintain such an operation starts at the grass-roots level with artisans and agricultural producers and expands to include businesses, industries, and local and state government agencies. Tamarack represents a significant economic opportunity for West Virginians, offering not only expanded markets for the state's heritage and cultural resources, but also in providing jobs and tax revenues. In its first year of operation, Tamarack hosted 550,000 visitors and produced in excess of \$5 million in sales. After five years of operation, Tamarack has hosted over 2.2 million visitors who have left behind over \$23.5 million in sales and over \$1.2 million in sales tax for the state. (National Trust for Historic Preservation ®)

### **Paducah, Kentucky – Artist Relocation Program**

Paducah has established an environment where artists and the arts are flourishing. Paducah's Artist Relocation Program was started in August of 2000 and is now a national model for using the arts for economic development.

The Artist Relocation Program is about artist ownership, thus giving the artists a vested interest in our community. Seventy artists have relocated and taken advantage of the financial and cultural incentives offered by Paducah. These artists have relocated from Arizona, California, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, Washington D.C. and Wisconsin.

#### **Artist Relocation Incentives**

- ❑ Lowertown (adjacent to Downtown Paducah) is dual zoned for commercial and residential use. This enables residents to have gallery/studio, restaurant/ café, etc. and living space all under one roof.
- ❑ 100% financing for purchase and rehabilitation of an existing structure or the building of a brand new structure.
- ❑ Basic loan package is 7% - 30yr. fixed rate up 300% of appraised value.
- ❑ Free lots for new construction as available.
- ❑ City will pay up to \$2500 for architectural services or other professional fees.

### **Conway's Cultural Centers**

Conway is fortunate to have two cultural centers - one in Downtown Conway and its adjacent neighborhoods along Main Street and the higher education institutions of Coastal Carolina University and Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) with their numerous cultural facilities and offerings.

Building upon these cultural centers and establishing new partnerships to expand Conway's tourism effort will enable Conway to capitalize on its cultural and heritage assets. Capitalizing on these assets should ultimately lead to protection, preservation or expansion of Conway's history and culture.

### **Downtown , the River and Adjacent Areas**

A vibrant artist community in Downtown Conway, the National Register properties along the Riverfront, in Downtown and scattered throughout the adjacent residential neighborhoods, and

the new Conway Library and Museum represent a large cluster to attract visitors. With the Main Street Theatre, the Conway Historic District Artists, the Conway Area Chamber of Commerce, Conway Main Street, the Conway Visitor Center and the Bluegrass on the Waccamaw festivals and performances taking place during the year, an established events calendar already exists for Conway. The Riverfront Park and Riverwalk provide a wonderful setting for festival, exercising, enjoying the water or just relaxing. The Visitor Center offers brochures including a self-guided tour brochure and maps, guided tours, and gift quality souvenirs.



## **Theatre of the Republic**

The Theatre of the Republic, a non-profit amateur theatre group was begun in July of 1969 by a small group of Conway residents who were interested in starting a local theatrical group. Known originally as the Conway Little Theatre, it was named the official theatre of Horry County by the legislative delegation in January of 1970. Since its inception, the theatre's schedule has continued to increase and ranges from six to eight major productions a year. The productions include four main season shows, musical reviews, holiday shows, and children's theatre productions. Classic works are presented through the Theatre of the Republic Repertory Group. Initiated in 2007, the Theatre runs a 3-day a week Children's After School Program. (Envision 2025)

The Theatre of the Republic completely rebuilt the old Holliday Theater, which suffered a major fire in the late 1980's that left only the four walls standing. The Theatre was then renamed the Conway Main Street Theater. It is home for the performing arts in Conway and was named the official Theatre of Horry County in 1975. The mission of the Theatre of the Republic is to provide affordable and quality community theatre for everyone. (Envision 2025)



Source: Theatre of the Republic

## **Horry County Museum**

In early 1966 Horry County Council appointed a Historic Preservation Commission which in turn formed the Horry County Historical Society and established the Horry County Museum.

The Horry County Museum was established in 1979 and its mission is to preserve the materials and objects relating to the history, prehistory and natural history of Horry County. The museum serves over 31,000 visitors each year providing permanent exhibits, special events, and a myriad of educational programs for school children. Currently housed on the corner of Main Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue the museum will be moving to the Burroughs School on Main Street at 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The move will dramatically increase the space available for exhibits to 28,000 square feet and will also include the 200-seat McCown Auditorium. (Envision 2025)



Source:Horry County

## **Horry County Historical Society**

Once formed by The Historic Preservation Commission in 1966, the Horry County Historical Society received its charter and non-profit status that same year. Their headquarters are at the Bryan House, 606 Main Street. The mission of the Historical Society is to discover and encourage the preservation of all written records and oral traditions touching on and pertaining to the history of Horry County, South Carolina to aid and encourage individuals and associations in compiling and publishing historical materials pertaining to Horry County and to



encourage the preservation and restoration of historic buildings and sites in Horry County. (Horry County Historic Preservation Society)

The Historical Society maintains an active website with an online bookstore and multiple offerings of historic materials including the Independent Republic Quarterly which the organization publishes. The Bryan House is made available by the Historical Society to the public on a rental basis for meetings and receptions. Yearly, during the Christmas season, the Historical Society has its Holiday Market at the Bryan House with tours of the house including the carriage house and gift and ornament sales along with artwork in the yard.



Source: Horry County Historical Society

## Special Events

Conway has a number of special events throughout the year staged by a variety of organizations. The **City of Conway** showcases the Waccamaw Riverfront with the Summer Series, which are held on selected weekends, includes two concerts, a theatrical production and the Conway Idol competition. Two other events along the River provided by the City are Movies at the Park and the Fall Festival. Ghost Talk, Ghost Walk held in October is coordinated by the Conwayborough Neighborhood Association with assistance from the Conway Visitor Center.

The **Chamber of Commerce** and the **Conway Main Street** are instrumental in putting on major events for Conway. Round the Fourth, held in June and the Christmas Parade in December are sponsored by The Chamber of Commerce. Conway Main Street organizes the Rivertown Jazz and Blues Festival. A Rivertown Christmas and Open House is a joint venture of Conway Main Street and downtown merchants.

The **Conway Historic District Artists** provide entertainment and art sales during the First Saturday Art Walk, which is held every month throughout the year. This event won an award from Main Street South Carolina for the efforts of the downtown artists. The artists also during the October Saturday Walk hold Art in the Alley and annually have approximately 20 artists displaying their art in addition to the galleries downtown.

**Bluegrass on the Waccamaw** is held in May of each year and has become a major draw for Conway. The event is held at the “Peanut Warehouse” on the Riverfront.

### **Downtown Historic District, Waccamaw Riverfront District, and the Conwayborough Historic Neighborhood and National Register individual properties**

The historic assets of Conway are numerous and offer wonderful opportunities to develop further Conway’s tourism potential. The City has two National Register Districts, one neighborhood district that is being nominated for National Register designation and 14 buildings and two structures that are individually listed in the Register. In 2005, the New South Architectural and Historic Survey of Conway identified 137 additional structures considered eligible for nomination.

The Conway Downtown Historic District is a collection of 46 commercial buildings, two structures, and one public building in the downtown area of Conway. The district contains twelve buildings and structures of key significance. Twenty-four other buildings contribute to the character of the district.

The Waccamaw River Warehouse Historic District includes three buildings, which range in date of construction from 1880 to 1900. Two of the structures are located on the banks of the Waccamaw River; the third warehouse stands a short distance inland. The older of the two buildings located on the banks of the river was built circa (ca.) 1880.

The Conwayborough Residential Historic District which is adjacent to Downtown covers approximately 18 blocks and 127 historic properties. The proposed district is comprised of 117 houses, four apartment buildings, one school, two churches, a library, a former post office, and one monument. Local design guidelines are recommended to maintain the character of the District.

### **Coastal Carolina and Horry-Georgetown Technical College**

Coastal Carolina University provides a number of cultural events each month at its numerous facilities for the arts. Each month on its Cultural Calendar a wide range of theatrical choices, musical performances, foreign movies, lectures, and visual art traveling exhibits are offered for their students, faculty and staff as well as the general public. Horry-Georgetown Technical College, Coastal Carolina’s neighbor has a performance facility and the Richardson Art Gallery which is located in the D. Kent Sharples Student and Community Life Complex.

### **Wheelwright Auditorium**

The 786-seat auditorium is located on the campus of Coastal Carolina University. It was built in 1981 with funding from mostly private sources. Both the theater and music departments of Coastal Carolina use the building throughout the year for student productions and performances. In addition, Wheelwright hosts many University and community events.

In 2000, the auditorium underwent a half million-dollar renovation. The work included the installation of rose and green Italian marble floors in the lobby with an inset of a bronze university seal. The area is highlighted with a corniced oval ceiling opening from the second floor above. The second level of Wheelwright Auditorium consists of a mezzanine, which opens into an open-air balcony and is surrounded by a reception room and practice rooms for the music and theatre departments.

## Wheelwright Auditorium



Source: Coastal Carolina University

## **Thomas W. and Robin W. Edwards College of Humanities and Fine Arts**

The Thomas W. and Robin W. Edwards College of Humanities and Fine Arts has several facilities for cultural events. The College is home for the Rebecca Randall Bryan Art Gallery, Edwards Recital Hall with seating for 146 people and the 120-seat Black Box Theatre. The Courtyard at the College is outdoor space that is utilized for crowds of up to 1000 people.

### **Rebecca Randall Bryan Art Gallery**

Located in the Thomas W. and Robin W. Edwards Humanities and Fine Arts Building at Coastal Carolina University, the Rebecca Randall Bryan Art Gallery is a public center for the visual arts in northeastern South Carolina. The gallery opened in 2001 and holds 6-8 exhibits each year. The exhibits are open to the public and the gallery is committed to its mission of researching, exhibiting and interpreting objects, activities and documents for the purpose of study, education and enjoyment. The programs of the Rebecca Bryan Gallery strive to represent and serve a broad range of audiences and cultures. (Envision 2020)

### **Wall Auditorium**

Wall Auditorium with 247 seats is used extensively throughout the year to expand the cultural offerings of Coastal Carolina to the people of Conway and Horry County. Wall Auditorium is located in the E. Craig Wall Sr. School of Business Administration.

### **Coastal Carolina University Foreign Film Series**

Coastal Carolina University presents foreign films from around the world each academic year. The movies are shown at night in the Wall Auditorium. The foreign film series is sponsored by the Coastal Office of Student Activities and Leadership and the Coastal Production Board. They are free and open to the public. Examples of their films include Free Zone, an Israeli film and Nobody Knows, an Asian film.

## **Horry-Georgetown Technical College**

The D. Kent Sharples Complex is a 90,000 square foot building, which includes several offices, the HGTC Library, Café 1100 and the Robinson Art Gallery among other uses. Richardson Art Gallery has traveling exhibits only and provides quality space for mostly local artists. The Burroughs and Chapin Auditorium is a much-used facility at HGTC. This auditorium has seating for 350 people. Many of the facilities at HGTC are available for rent by the public.

Unique to HGTC are the dining facilities that are open to be public and allow students to learn under the direction of professors and chefs. Fowler Dining Room, Café 1100, and the Coffee Shop are all located at the Conway Campus and offer a variety of dining experiences.

### **Eco-tourism**

The term “eco-tourism” describes the growing trend among travelers who want to have a direct, eco-friendly experience of the natural environment, culture and history of the places they visit. Ecotourism also educates and involves the traveler in experiences related to recycling, water conservation, waste management and energy efficiency through hospitality providers. (The Institute of EcoTourism)

Eco-tourism is about connecting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. This means that those who implement and participate in responsible tourism activities should follow the following eco-tourism principles:

- ❑ Minimize impact
- ❑ Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- ❑ Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts
- ❑ Provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- ❑ Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people (International Ecotourism Society)

"Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism ... requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should ... ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them." (World Tourism Organization, 2004)

Conway has great potential to offer a variety of ecotourism opportunities for its citizens and visitors. Many public facilities and open space already are available for use and other projects are in the planning stages.

### **Greenway Master Plan**

Upon completing the overall Conway Greenway Master Plan in July 2005, the Conway Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee chose six greenway corridors as Priority Greenway Corridors. The priority designation highlights these corridors as the initial greenway corridors to be developed first as part of the Conway Greenway Master Plan. Priority corridors were chosen based on the following factors: overall connectivity, existing facilities served by and within the corridor, historic nature of the area and user experience levels. The Bicycle and



Pedestrian Committee will continue to examine the feasibility of projects within these Priority Greenway Corridors and other opportunities for greenway improvements in Conway.

An added project of the Master Plan that has great potential is the Blueways Trail that includes stretches of Crabtree Canal, Kingston Lake, and the Waccamaw River and ends at Jackson Bluff Landing. With the 2007 addition of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife project on West Cox Ferry Road this trail provides Conway with another recreational opportunity for its citizens and visitors.

### **Crabtree Swamp Stream Restoration Initiative**

The Crabtree Swamp Stream Restoration Initiative was established in 2007 by the Kingston Lake Environmental Action Network (KLEAN), to explore ways to restore Crabtree Swamp. The group is comprised of local agency representatives, Coastal Carolina University - Waccamaw Watershed Academy, local volunteers, the City of Conway and Horry County. Their goals are to improve the water quality and the appearance of Crabtree Canal.

Crabtree Canal is included the City's Blueways Trail and while the Initiative wishes to improve the appearance of the Canal the goal is to make the area a public amenity as well. Crabtree Canal is included in the City's Greenway Master Plan efforts for this intended use.

### **Horry County Boat Landings**

County owned parks and boat landings on the Waccamaw, Little Pee Dee and Big Pee Dee within the Conway Area are listed below. All boat ramps shown are approximately 30 minutes or less from downtown and less than 30 miles away. Many of the boat ramps are adjacent or within close proximity to either the Waccamaw River Heritage Preserve River Trail properties or are part of the Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge, which is owned by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

#### **Waccamaw River**

- ❑ Bucksville Landing  
This landing has 2 ramps, a dock, is paved with 6 parking spaces and has .25 acres.
- ❑ Hootersville Landing (1460 Caines Landing Road)  
This landing has 1 ramp, is unpaved and has .2 acres.
- ❑ Lee's Landing (485 River Road)  
Lee's Landing has 1 ramp, is unpaved and has .5 acres.
- ❑ Pitch Landing (100 Pitch Landing Road)  
Pitch Landing has 1 ramp, is unpaved and has .5 acres.
- ❑ Port Harrelson Landing (1900 Big Bull Landing)  
This landing has 1 ramp, is unpaved and has 1.38 acres.
- ❑ Reeves Ferry Landing (588 Old Reaves Ferry Road)  
Reeves Ferry Landing has 1 ramp, is paved with 26 spaces and has 6.8 acres.
- ❑ Savannah Bluff Landing (990 Waccamaw Drive)

Savannah Bluff Landing has 2 ramps, is unpaved and has 0.85 acres.

#### Little Pee Dee River

- ❑ Jordan Lake Landing (8620 Jordan Lake Road)  
Jordan Lake Landing has 1 ramp, is unpaved and has .54 acres.
- ❑ Punch Bowl Landing (7099 Punch Bowl Road)  
Punch Bowl Landing has 2 ramps, 1 dock, is paved with 25 parking spaces and has 2 acres.

#### Great Pee Dee River

- ❑ Yauhannah Landing (9300 Highway 701 South)  
This landing has 2 ramps, 1 dock is paved with 30 parking spaces and has 1 acre.

### **Regional and Local Ecotourism along the Waccamaw River**

The Waccamaw River Heritage Preserve River Trail with 5,347 acres to the north of Conway and the Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge with 18,620 acres to the south have protected a significant amount of the River for present and future generations. The City of Conway and other entities like the Winyah Rivers Foundation, the Crabtree Swamp Stream Restoration Initiative will play a major role in adding Crabtree Swamp and Kingston Lake to these major efforts and highlight Conway as a center for ecotourism activity on the Waccamaw River.

### **Area Outdoor Outfitters and Paddling Clubs**

There are six outfitters within a four-county area – Horry, Georgetown, Charleston and Marion counties that use the ocean, marshes and rivers with boats, kayaks and canoes for a wide variety of activities. These outfitters are located in Conway, Marion, Georgetown, Myrtle Beach and Awendaw. Typical trips and activities that are offered by these outfitters include hiking, backpacking, sea and river kayaking, canoeing, camping, environmental education and orienteering. Most outfitters offer overnight and nighttime trips and meals may be provided. One outfitter is located along the Riverfront in Conway. The Conway Marina Store also has kayaks and canoes for rent.

There are two paddling clubs in Horry County - the Long Bay Paddlers (Myrtle Beach) and the Lazy Navy (Murrells Inlet). The Long Bay Paddlers have trips on the Waccamaw River as part of their yearly trip schedule.



Source: The Sun News



Source: The Sun News

## **Agritourism**

“Second to tourism, agriculture has the second largest impact of any industry in South Carolina, second only to tourism. There now exists a major movement taking shape to combine the two. Agritourism is a growing segment of our industry.”(South Carolina Department of Agriculture)

“Agritourism can come in many forms. Roadside markets and farmers markets offer farm-fresh produce and the chance to interact with growers, which is becoming more important to consumers. Hunting and/or fishing operations are increasing all around South Carolina. Bird watching, which is a large and growing pastime is another possible agritourism business. With each of these experiences the customer gets the benefits of fresh air, open space and relaxation in a country setting.” (South Carolina Department of Agriculture)

“The South Carolina Department of Agriculture is establishing a statewide agritourism association. As part of this effort, a database for an agritourism directory will be assembled. The goal is to develop print and electronic marketing resources for distribution on-line or in places like welcome centers to assist visitors in finding agritourism operators with more ease.” (South Carolina Department of Agriculture)

### **Hyman's Vineyards**

Hyman's Vineyards located at 2980 Highway 378 in Conway serves as a model for other potential agritourism operators. With funding from a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Value-Added Producer Grant, Hyman Vineyards was given the resources to become an example for rural economic development in the coastal Pee Dee region of South Carolina. (Hyman's Vineyards)

Hyman's Vineyards has a wide range of products developed from the growing of muscadine grapes. Also the Vineyard has, in cooperation with USDA and Clemson University, become involved in the South Carolina Herb Project to grow non-traditional herbs. Hyman's Vineyards is involved in growing, formulating, production and marketing of its products thus expanding the scope of traditional farming into a diversified agritourism business involved in all aspects of retail and commercial product production. (Hyman's Vineyards)



### **L. W. Paul Historical Farm**

The Horry County Museum at the L.W. Paul Living History Farm has been established with the mission to preserve and protect the materials and objects relating to the history and culture

of the Horry County farmer. The reconstructed farm will represent the agriculture and domestic life traditions on the one horse family farm in Horry County between the years of 1900 and 1955.

The 17+ acre site locate just north of Conway on U. S. 701 will feature a visitor's center with general store, farmhouse, livestock barn, smokehouse, chicken coop, outhouse, pack house, tobacco barn, blacksmith shop, syrup shed, and gristmill. Hands-on interpretative activities at the farm will include; shelling corn and grinding grits, cropping and stringing tobacco, harvesting and tending crops with mule-power, making syrup, and domestic activities like washing clothes, making lye soap, and cooking with wood. Interpretative exhibits will include livestock, farm equipment, turpentine and timber displays, and traditional Horry County row crops.

The farm will allow visitors to relive life on the farm in the first half of the twentieth century in Horry County. Interactive programs will encourage the public to work "hands on" with these traditional crafts. A visit to the Museum at the Burroughs School will expose patrons to the story of Horry County history and a trip to the farm will give them a chance to relive it."(Horry County)



Horry County 2007 Annual Report



Horry County 2007 Annual Report

## **Farmland/Ranch Protection Programs**

The United States Department of Agriculture collects its agricultural census data at the County level. Horry County with its rapid growth lost ten percent of its farms between 1997 and 2002 (the latest census data available) or a drop from 1,101 farms to 988 farms. The total acreage lost was from 197,053 in 1997 to 188,311 in 2002. (United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service)

Farmers can participate in several state and federal programs to assist them in protecting the heritage of farming and the ecological benefits derived from working the land. One of the programs is the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, which purchases conservation easements on productive farm and ranch land. Farmers receive financial assistance in exchange for protecting habitat, wetlands and streams while utilizing best management practices to achieve both personal economic gains and improved environmental quality. In Horry County, the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program has sixteen farms enrolled and two farms pending, permanently conserving over 752 acres. (Envision 2025 and Natural Resources Conservation Service, Horry County Field Office)



## **Conservation Easements Legislation**

Major federal legislation passed in 2007 is helping property owners, farmers and ranchers willing to donate conservation easements, still continue farming and ranching. Previously if a landowner had an annual income of \$100,000 and donated an easement worth \$1 million the owner could deduct \$30,000 a year or 30 percent of his income for six years. This would make his total deduction from his federal income taxes only \$180,000 of the \$1 million gift.

The continued use of the Farm and Ranch Protection Program could considerably aid in agritourism business development in the Conway area and throughout Horry County. The change in federal legislation for the donation of conservation easements should also be promoted as a means to protect farmland conversion and also offer opportunities for expanding into agritourism and ecotourism.

## **Farmers Markets**

Farmers markets or an expansion of farmers markets such as Saturday Market in Eugene, Oregon have played important roles in the success of downtowns and represent a substantial element in improving the quality of life of a community while serving as a major tourism draw. Highlighted below are success stories from Eugene and Anderson, South Carolina.

### **Eugene, Oregon's Saturday Market**

The oldest and one of the premier markets of its kind in the United States is the Saturday Market in Eugene, Oregon. In early 1970, there were three main factors that brought on the Market: (1) a large number of artisans and a lively interest in buying and using local crafts, as shown by the success of annual Christmas craft sales, (2) an abundance of local produce and no downtown outlet since the closure of an old Farmers Market in the 1950's, and (3) a dying downtown in need of revitalizing. (Saturday Market)

Saturday Market's guiding principles which were considered essential by the organizers were (1) locate on public property, (2) held outdoors, (3) must be downtown, and (d) must be aesthetically pleasing. In Eugene the Saturday Market is now an institution. It enters casually into conversations: "I bought it at the Saturday Market;" "See you at the Saturday Market;" and (to a newcomer) "Have you been to the Saturday Market?" (Saturday Market)

### **Saturday Market Venues**



Source: Saturday Market



Source: Saturday Market

## Saturday Market Venues



Source: Saturday Market



Source: Saturday Market

## Anderson County Farmers Market

The Anderson County Farmers Market has become one of the major outdoor places to hold events in Anderson. In addition to being the home of the Farmers Market on Thursdays and Fridays during the season the facility has become much more. The Market known as the Farmers Market Pavilion plays host to concerts, tournaments, festivals, family reunions, weddings and receptions, community meetings and a variety of other events.



Source: Anderson County



Source: Anderson County

## Conway's Agritourism Opportunities

With Hyman's Vineyards and the L. W. Paul Farm, a project of the Horry County Museum, a good foundation is in place to foster agritourism in Conway. The re-establishment of a farmers market in downtown or in the Riverfront District especially in a covered facility would greatly strengthen that foundation and provide a community asset as well. The Horry County Clemson Extension Service received a grant in 2008 to complete an agritourism inventory. Included in the scope of work to be completed is the development of a farmers market for Conway.

Hyman's Vineyards and the L. W. Paul Farm are quality tourism assets and obviously do not represent an exhaustive inventory of agritourism. A thorough inventory would need to be completed with specific attention given to an area close to Conway. The work to be completed by the Clemson Extension Service will go a long way toward advancing agritourism in Conway.

## **Funding Sources/Organizations**

Many of the funding sources identified in the Recreation/Open Space Element provide funds that could create ecotourism benefits for Conway. The funding sources listed below are specific to tourism development or marketing, principally heritage tourism. The organizations listed are statewide organizations that are involved in the development of heritage tourism, ecotourism or agritourism in South Carolina.

### **South Carolina Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism**

#### **Tourism Marketing Partnership Program**

Provides matching grants to eligible applicants who have an interest in improving local and state economic health through the creation of tourism partnerships

#### **Accommodations Tax**

The use of ATAX funds (percentage of total funds local governments receive) must be used for "tourism-related expenditures". The eligible expenditures include: advertising and promotion of tourism so as to develop and increase tourist attendance through the generation of publicity; promotion of the arts and cultural events; construction, maintenance, and operation of facilities for civic and cultural activities including construction and maintenance of access and other nearby roads and utilities for the facilities; the criminal justice system, law enforcement, fire protection, solid waste collection, and health facilities when required to serve tourists and tourist facilities. This is based on the estimated percentage of costs directly attributed to tourists; public facilities such as restrooms, dressing rooms, parks, and parking lots; tourist shuttle transportation; control and repair of waterfront erosion; operating visitor information centers.

### **S. C. Department of Archives and History & Preserve America**

#### **Preserve America**

The Preserve America is a federal initiative/program created in part by President Bush's Executive Order 13287 and in cooperation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the U. S. Department of Interior, Agriculture and others. The program officially recognizes counties, cities and neighborhoods that demonstrate an ongoing community effort to preserve its historic resources and is promoting heritage tourism.

The benefits include designation as a Preserve America Community, Preserve America signage, and eligibility for their State and Federal grant programs. The S. C. Department of Archives and History is sub-recipient of \$150,000.00, which is being offered to South Carolina communities in addition to the larger federal grant program. The State grants are 50/50 matching grants (\$2,500 minimum - \$20,000 maximum) and the Federal grants are 50/50 (\$20,000 minimum - \$150,000 maximum) with in-kind donated services being allowed for part of the match.

#### **Assistance to Local Governments**

By providing information and training, the State Historic Preservation Office helps municipal and county governments design and implement local preservation programs to safeguard their historic properties. Communities can choose to become Certified Local Governments (CLGs) and participate in a federal-state-local partnership. These

communities receive technical assistance and can apply for the preservation grant funds that the State Historic Preservation Office awards annually to CLGs in South Carolina, generally \$60,000 to \$80,000. (South Carolina Department of Archives and History)

## Grants

The State Historic Preservation Office administers federal survey and planning grants that can help organizations, institutions, and government entities across the state plan for preserving historic properties. The grants, which typically range from \$1,500 to \$25,000, can fund historical/architectural surveys, National Register nominations, preservation planning, and preservation education. In addition, projects located within cities, towns, or counties that are Certified Local Governments may also be eligible for “bricks and mortar” grants. Eligible projects include stabilizing historic buildings or structures or protecting them from the adverse effects of the weather. (South Carolina Department of Archives and History)

## **The Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation**

Established in 1990 the Palmetto Trust conducts preservation training and outreach, organizes tours and lectures, lobbies for preservation legislation, and manages a revolving fund for saving historic properties.

## **South Carolina Department of Natural Resources**

### The Conservation Bank

The mission is to improve the quality of life in South Carolina through the conservation of significant natural resource lands, wetlands, historical properties, and archeological sites. The objectives are to protect significant natural resource areas and wildlife habitats, protect water quality, maintain the State’s forest lands, protect farmlands, especially family farms, protect and enhance the State’s natural beauty, protect and enhance significant historical and archaeological sites, enhance public access for outdoor recreation and preserve traditional uses such as hunting, fishing, and other types of outdoor recreation, and to encourage cooperation and innovative partnerships among landowners, state agencies, municipalities, and non-profit organizations.

Starting in 2004 through 2008 the Conservation Bank has provided grants for the purchase of 134,171.92 acres costing \$70,739,559. The types of purchases included are forests and wetlands (124,178 acres @ \$53,175,013); farm land (58,957.72 acres @ \$9,041,904); urban parks (551 acres @ \$7,611,140); and historical land (485.2 acres @ \$911,502).

## **Nature Conservancy**

### Private Lands Conservation

“Private lands conservation is an innovative tactic that leverages the increasing interest of the private sector to take part in conservation. The Conservancy works with landowners, communities, cooperatives and businesses to establish local groups that can protect land. Some of the main tools used to achieve these goals include land trusts, conservation easements, private reserves and incentives.” (Nature Conservancy)



## Acquiring Land

In the United States, The Nature Conservancy uses land acquisition as a principal tool of its conservation effort. The Conservancy helps to protect approximately 15 million acres in the United States. (Nature Conservancy)

### **South Carolina Nature-Based Tourism Association (SCNBTA)**

“The South Carolina Nature-Based Tourism Association members are dedicated to providing the best possible nature-related services to South Carolina residents and visitors, while striving to maintain the ecological health of our state's pristine environment.” (South Carolina Nature-Based Tourism Association)

The SCNBTA strives to educate its members and promote the nature-based tourism experience. Opportunities for networking and professional development provide members with the tools to build, manage, and market nature-based businesses and tourism. The organization supports conservation of natural and cultural resources that make the nature-based tourism experience possible. (South Carolina Nature-Based Tourism Association)

### **South Carolina Paddlesports Industry Association (SCPIA)**

“SCPIA is a 501-C3 non-profit organization that was formed to service outfitters, retailers, clubs, tourism entities and everyone who loves to paddle in our state. Their mission is to promote safety, preservation, education, and opportunities in the South Carolina paddlesport industry.” (SCPIA)

### **Clemson Extension Service**

The Clemson Extension Service has been a resource for not only the farm community but rural communities and towns as well. The Extension Service provides technical assistance on a variety of issues throughout South Carolina.

### **United States Department of Agriculture –Farmers Markets and Agritourism**

The Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) was created through a recent amendment of the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976. The grants, authorized by the FMPP, are targeted to help improve and expand domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Approximately \$1 million is in place for Fiscal Year 2008 for the FMPP, with the requirement that the maximum amount awarded for any one proposal of \$75,000. Eligible groups that may apply include agricultural cooperatives, local governments, nonprofit corporations, public health corporations, economic development corporations, regional farmers market authorities and Tribal governments. (U. S. Department of Agriculture)

## **Summary of Findings**

### **South Carolina Tourism Action Plan**

The state of South Carolina has a thriving tourism industry, which is projected to continue to grow. The Tourism Action Plan (TAP) of the South Carolina Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism has identified goals that will serve to effectively improve in its efforts to attract visitors to our state. These goals are:

- ❑ To improve collaboration amongst industry & officials;
- ❑ To identify high spending potential tourist segments;
- ❑ To develop & package its tourism assets to attract the markets identified, and
- ❑ To execute an appropriate marketing strategy. (South Carolina TAP)

The TAP divides the state into Tourism Destination Areas and identifies Tourism Sites. Unfortunately Conway is not listed as part of a Tourism Destination Area either with the Hilton Head/Charleston/Myrtle Beach or The East (Florence/Darlington/Hartsville/Marion area). The Tourism Sites are shown predominantly for cities and towns in the different Tourism Destination Areas.

The TAP does include Conway in its Product and Facilities Audit. The Audit scores Conway as high in significance, uniqueness and potential, average in condition and low in terms of interest in tourism development. The Audit says that there is a lack of awareness for Conway's tourism potential. Other negatives were restaurants hours on Sundays and the number of different brochures. On the positive side, quality restaurants, the Cypress Inn, the Riverwalk and Conway's live oak trees were highlighted as making Conway a "walkable community".

Conway should take steps to develop its own Tourism Action Plan based on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Five Guiding Principles and Four Basic Steps. Three tourism segments well suited for Conway to develop include cultural/heritage, eco-tourism, and agri-tourism. Finally, as part of this process the City should communicate and include staff from South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism in order to lobby for inclusion in the Tourism Action Plan as part of a Tourism Destination Area and take advantage of possible funding for projects in the Conway area.

### **Cultural/Heritage Tourism**

Heritage tourism is the fastest growing segment of travel and tourism, South Carolina's leading industry. A visit to a historic site is the most popular heritage activity in the state. In 2003, more than 1.6 million travelers visited South Carolina's historic attractions and spent more than \$438 million. Many more travelers who did not visit historic sites were attracted to communities where they shopped in historic downtowns, stayed in a bed-and-breakfast inns or historic hotels, and dined or enjoyed entertainment in historic buildings. (South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Preserving our Past to Build a Healthy Future, A Historic Preservation Plan for South Carolina 2007-2015)

Heritage tourism will be extremely important to our small rural towns as an added element of their local economies. With the abundance of nationally franchised restaurants, motels, and superstores, small towns that retain their historic character and sense of place will attract visitors who enjoy the unique authenticity of historic communities. (South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Preserving our Past to Build a Healthy Future, A Historic Preservation Plan for South Carolina 2007-2015)

"Eighty-one percent of the 146.4 million U.S. adults who took a trip of 50 miles or more away from home in the past year included historical or cultural activities on at least one of their trips. Compared to other travelers, cultural and heritage tourists spent more, \$623 vs. \$457 per trip, not including transportation to their destination." (Travel Industry Association of America, The Power of Travel 2006)

## **Ecotourism/Nature-Based Tourism**

South Carolina's forests are an invaluable resource for the state. Our forests provide watershed protection, wildlife habitat, forest products, beauty, recreation opportunities, and serve to improve air quality. (South Carolina Department of Agriculture)

The growing number of South Carolinians and those from other states who participate in hunting, fishing and other related activities is impressive. About 985,000 or almost 1 in every 3 residents---fishes in South Carolina in some form or fashion. About 300,000 people or roughly 1/10th of the state's population hunts. And about 807,000 citizens of the state and over 400,000 non-residents engage in bird feeding, bird watching, canoeing, hiking and backpacking. (South Carolina Department of Agriculture)

Nature-based tourism---sometimes called ecotourism---is also making a big economic impact in South Carolina. It focuses on visiting, appreciating and learning about natural and cultural resources. It is one of the most rapidly growing segments of the travel and tourism industry. South Carolina, with an abundance of rivers and streams and scenic vistas, continues to be well suited as a nature travel destination. (South Carolina Department of Agriculture)

## **Agritourism**

Alternative and agritourism enterprises allow farmers and ranchers to earn higher profits by replacing or supplementing traditional farm operations with innovative on-farm or on-ranch ventures. (USDA – Alternative Enterprises and Agritourism)

Alternative enterprises can take many forms. They can produce new or unique crops, livestock or add value to traditional agricultural products. They can produce recreation, nature-based, or educational outlets. They can rely on traditional farm practices or use alternative methods, such as organic systems. They can be labor and resource intensive and can operate seasonally, or year-round. (USDA – Alternative Enterprises and Agritourism)

Farmers and ranchers rely on the natural resources on their land “to keep their family on the farm and the farm in their family”. They also require good stewardship to be sustainable. Since the land's resources provides their living, conserving those resources makes good business sense. (USDA – Alternative Enterprises and Agritourism)

## **Farmers Markets**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that the number of farmers markets increased more than 7 percent between 2005 and 2006 according to their survey. The new numbers are based on an update of the National Farmers Market Directory by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), and the preliminary results of the 2006 USDA National Farmers Market Survey, conducted by AMS in partnership with Michigan State University. (USDA)

The updated directory lists 4,385 farmers markets currently operating in 2006, up from 4,093 farmers markets in 2005. As a result of the strong growth in the number of farmers markets, total sales volumes are estimated at about \$1 billion for 2005, significantly larger than the estimated sales volume of \$888 million in 2000. (USDA)

Average sales at individual farmers markets in 2005 totaled about \$245,000; average annual sales per vendor totaled \$7,108. Marketing opportunities at farmers markets were sufficiently

favorable in 2005 that, on average, 25 percent of vendors from surveyed farmers markets relied on these markets as their sole source of farm-based income. (USDA)

## **Community Input**

Listed below is the tourism input received during the three Community Workshops held as part of the Comprehensive Plan process prior to the Steering Committee meetings.

- ❑ Eco-tourism is a good fit/provide incentives/Crabtree Canal
- ❑ Increased hours for merchants/Sunday
- ❑ Outdoor and rooftop dining
- ❑ More public improvements and walking opportunities
- ❑ Art Center/Cultural Center to gather
- ❑ Main Street Corridor/Hwy. 378 Corridor
- ❑ Business development along Riverwalk
- ❑ Entry and directional signage
- ❑ Brand Conway/advertise & promote statewide
- ❑ Capitalize on Conway's assets – River and history/tours/kayaks/marina & river activities ecotourism efforts
- ❑ Partner w/CCU- history and theatre majors to help w/tours – attract and support businesses that are tourism-related
- ❑ Support of visitors programs – promoting tours – more \$'s for marketing including a marketing person – horse and buggy
- ❑ More performances at Riverfront Park
- ❑ Capitalize on opportunities (resources) for more cultural events

In summary, Conway has many tourism assets other communities do not have and should strive to expand its programs to draw visitors. With the number of tourists that are already visiting the Grand Strand day trips offer a lucrative market opportunity for Conway. Finally, Conway should continue to communicate with the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism to gain their recognition of Conway part of a Tourism Destination Area and as a Tourism site.

## **Primary Goal**

The City of Conway should take steps to complete a tourism action plan to guide its efforts in three major tourism initiatives – cultural/heritage tourism, ecotourism, and agritourism. The City should continue to partner with other organizations to provide festivals and events to promote Conway as a cultural center for the area. Conway will expand its tourism facilities and protect and preserve its historical and cultural assets as part of its tourism effort.

## **Goal 1: Develop a cultural/heritage tourism component as part of the tourism action plan.**

Objective 1: Use the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Four Steps and Five Principles to guide the development of the cultural/heritage tourism component. Take into account the South Carolina Tourism Action Plan (TAP) in developing this component and seeking funding opportunities.

Strategies: Inventory the tourism assets of Conway, both developed and undeveloped – (ex. vacant historic building, large vacant upper floor in downtown).

Hold a series of public input meetings/workshops to build support for and involvement in Conway's tourism efforts. Ensure the process is broad based.

Research and identify potential grant funding opportunities at the state and federal level.

Develop a multi-year plan to include needed capital improvements. Include capital improvements in the Priority Investment Element.

Seek to partner with other organizations in a regional tourism plan.

Participate in the Theatre of the Republic/Main Street Theatre's efforts to produce an outdoor drama in the Riverfront Park area.

Include the Conway "Brand" in the marketing component.

**Objective 2:** Promote tourist-related businesses and foster private sector investment in tourist-related businesses. Support the efforts of the Conway Historic District Artists.

Strategies: Consider the Paducah model and other incentives for Downtown, the Riverfront District and other adjacent commercial areas. Approach the financial community to seek their support. Work with the Conway Historic District Artist to develop possible incentives.

Recommend an ad hoc committee be appointed to work on the establishment of a Conway Artisan's Center with permanent gallery space. Partner with the Conway Historic District Artists to establish a relationship with Horry County Arts & Cultural Enhancement (ACE) to participate in these efforts. Pursue the former library and museum buildings as part of this effort.

Join organizations, which may be mutually beneficial and would serve to advance Conway's tourism efforts.

Work with the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, and others to develop a tourism website.

## **Goal 2: Develop an ecotourism component of the tourism action plan.**

**Objective 1:** Integrate environmental education and nature-based activities in the development of the ecotourism component. Take into account the S. C. TAP in the development of this component.

Strategies: Inventory the natural resource assets of the City including areas with potential but needing to be improved such as Crabtree Canal.

Describe improvements and include cost estimates if possible for projects associated with ecotourism. Include projects in the Priority Investment Element where appropriate.

Include the ecotourism component in the meetings/workshops on tourism in Conway.

Implement the Greenway Plan.

Complete the Waccamaw Blueway Trail and promote River activities with the Waccamaw River Heritage Preserve River Trail and Waccamaw River National Wildlife Refuge including expansion of the protected areas.

Participate and assist in the implementation of the Crabtree Swamp Stream Restoration Initiative.

Work with Horry County Schools to establish “green” field trips for area students.

Promote ecotourism as part of the efforts to establish the Conway “Brand”.

**Objective 2:** Promote ecotourism and foster private sector business investment in ecotourism.

Strategies: Join or partner with nature-based groups in promoting ecotourism efforts in the Conway area.

Promote stewardship in all marketing of Conway’s nature-based activities.

Establish incentives for nature-based businesses.

Promote the River and the City to outdoor organizations throughout the state.

Seek state and federal grants, some of which may be used to establish ecotourism businesses.

**Goal 3: Develop an agritourism component in the tourism action plan.**

**Objective 1:** Stress sustainability, value-added approaches, the family farm and ecotourism opportunities in the development of the agritourism component.

Strategies: Develop a marketing plan that highlights area agritourism businesses and the opportunities available for other potential businesses.

Assist in the Extension Service and the State of S. C. Department of Agriculture - Agritourism Directory efforts to inventory agritourism businesses in the Conway area in order to take advantage the Department of Agriculture’s plans for marketing.

Meet with the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street USA, Clemson Extension Service and others to develop plans for a Farmers Market facility and management plan.

Promote the farmers market facility concept to the farmers who utilize the existing farmers market. Incorporate the Conway “Brand”.

**Objective 2:** Promote cooperation among agritourism businesses and potential businesses.

Strategies: Support the development of cooperative marketing among agritourism businesses.

Study the feasibility of agritourism trails in the Conway area.

Strategies: Promote incentives for existing and potential agritourism businesses such as value-added grants and the farmers alliance program.

Include agritourism in the workshops/meetings on tourism.

Support the Natural Resources Conservation Service in their efforts to expand the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

Complete an Urban Forestry Plan with assistance from the South Carolina Forestry Commission.