



American Planning Association  
South Carolina Chapter  
*Making Great Communities Happen*

**THE PALMETTO PLANNER**

A Publication of the South Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association

## South Carolina Tourism: How to Preserve the Goose that Lays the Golden Egg

By Edward T. McMahon, Senior Resident Fellow, Urban Land Institute (ULI) and frequent visitor to South Carolina

Where did you go on your last vacation? Was it rewarding and satisfying? Would you recommend it to a friend? Did the destination meet your expectations? Or were you disappointed? Did traffic congestion, dirty air, crowded beaches, slipshod service or excessive commercialism leave you feeling frustrated and cheated?

Tourism is big business. Americans spend more than \$800 billion a year on travel and recreational pursuits away from home. According to the US Travel Association, travelers spent \$18.1 billion in South Carolina in 2013. Domestic travel expenditures supported 167,280 South Carolina jobs, comprising 10 percent of total private industry employment, and domestic travel in South Carolina directly generated more than \$1.3 billion in tax revenue in 2013.

Tourism is also a doubled edged sword. On the one hand, it provides communities with many benefits: new jobs; an expanded tax base; enhanced infrastructure; improved facilities; and an expanded market for local products, art and handicrafts. On the other hand, it can create problems and burdens for local communities, such as crowding, traffic congestion, noise, increased crime, haphazard development, cost-of-living increases and degraded resources. Michael Kelly, former Chairman of the American Planning Association's Tourism Planning Division says, "The impacts of tourism on a community can be beneficial if planned and managed or extremely damaging if left without controls."



So the question is: how can South Carolina communities maximize the benefits of tourism, while minimizing the burdens? In other words, how can it preserve the goose that lays the golden egg? First, communities need to recognize the difference between mass market tourism and sustainable tourism. Mass market tourism is all about "heads in beds." It is high volume, high impact, but low yield. A classic example is Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

When I was in college, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida was the "spring break capital" of America. City officials thought it was a great idea to invite millions of college kids to come down for a few weeks each year. What they didn't count on, of course, was that the college kids would sleep six to eight per room; and the only thing they would spend money on was beer. The city had to hire all kinds of extra police and clean-up crews and pretty soon Ft. Lauderdale had a reputation as an "out-of-control town full of drunken college kids."

Today, Ft. Lauderdale is no longer the spring break capital. It made a deliberate decision to change course. Today, it may not have as many tourists as it used to, but the tourists who do come are older and more affluent. They sleep two people to a room. They dine at fancy restaurants and shop in high-end stores. The city doesn't need

*Continued on page 8.*

## CONTENTS

- 2 President's Message
- 3 New/Returning SCAPA Members
- 3 Legislative Update
- 3 Professional Development
- 4 Conference Recap

- 5 Newly Certified Planners
- 5 Clemson Update
- 6 CofC Update
- 7 Upcoming Events
- 11 Sponsors
- 12 Executive Committee



## Message from the President: Love What You Do

Do you love what you do? I consider myself extremely fortunate to do work that is meaningful and is making a difference for the communities in which I work. It is also very fulfilling that I actually like what I do for a living. It is my great fortune to work with amazing, talented people, not only at my company but also the clients and citizens I have the privilege to work with each day. Don't misunderstand, it is called "work" and it does have its moments of frustration, but, on the whole, I find my work a pleasure and am very grateful for that.

Attending the South Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association (SCAPA) Summer Conference on July 30th brought this idea of loving what you do to the forefront of my mind. The speakers during the conference were outstanding and with very few exceptions you could tell that each truly enjoys their jobs. In fact, I would suspect that most of them would not even call their work a "job." While all were great, three speakers particularly resonated with me.

During the session "Multi-Agency Coordination for Multi-Modal Connectivity in SC Communities," Bob Schneider, Executive Director of The Comet, Columbia's transit provider, spoke about public transit in a way that most had never heard. He is clearly excited about the work he is doing to advance public transit through better, more logical operations, branding and technology that are targeted to the desired consumer, and convenience that meets the needs of his riders and prospective riders. After the session I had the privilege to chat with Bob, whom I've known for several years, and his enthusiasm is contagious. If we could replicate Bob's attitude, perspective, and delivery, transit would be much more viable throughout our state.

The second speaker that "spoke" to me about passion for your work was Nancy Stoudenmire, Director of Human Resources and Planning for the Columbia Housing Authority. She was part of the panel session, "Housing PSA: Public, Student and Affordable." Nancy told the stories of several housing redevelopment projects in Columbia over the past couple of decades. These were truly personal stories, told from Nancy's heart; these were not simply "work." Having spent nearly 40 years at the Columbia Housing Authority, you just know that Nancy has experienced her share of frustration, but that is not the takeaway for her – the takeaway is that she gets to change lives each and every day.

Third, Andy Smith, Executive Director of the Nickelodeon Theatre spoke as part of "Culture and the Creative Economy." Andy is certainly part of the "creative class" in Columbia, but he realizes that his contribution can and should go well beyond "art." While some might think Andy's job is simply to run a theater, it is clear that Andy strives to expand that notion with each new

day. The Indie Grits Festival has blossomed into a tremendous venue for all things creative and is a perfect example of bringing people back to our urban centers. Andy is raising the bar even higher this coming year by locating Indie Grits on the rivers, greatly underutilized resources of the Midlands.

In listening to all the speakers at the conference, I was reminded of how broad planning is and how many different career tracks are available within the planning profession. Unlike many professions that are narrower in focus, planning offers you many avenues to find your joy. That doesn't necessarily mean you need to find a new job, but rather you may just need to explore your options within your current job. Additionally, much of our happiness is our choice, so if you are less than satisfied with your current position I would encourage you to examine your attitude and approach to what you do each day. As a transportation planner, I once heard, "A bad attitude is like a flat tire. If you don't change it, you'll never go anywhere." Self-examination is healthy and something we should each do on a regular basis.

While being passionate about one's employment makes going to work each day enjoyable, as planners we do need to balance our passions with the best interests of those for which we work. As part of the Principles to Which We Aspire, the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct make it clear that we are to follow the direction of our employers and clients, regardless of our passions, provided it is not illegal or plainly inconsistent with our primary obligation to the public interest.

Bottom line, we are privileged to be planners, to work in an industry with so many possibilities – career possibilities and possibilities for making positive impacts in the communities of the Palmetto State and beyond. We have the most talented and passionate planners in the country right here in South Carolina, and I am proud to be part of such an impressive group of people as those that comprise SCAPA's membership. As you hone your passion each day, please think of how you can share it with the rest of SCAPA. If you haven't realized your passion yet, please let me or another Executive Committee member know how SCAPA can help you find it.

As always, it is my honor to lead SCAPA and I thank each of you for making this the great and ever improving organization that it is.

*Ernie*



# Welcome to New or Returning SCAPA Members!

Layne West, City of Cayce  
Gary Goodfriend AICP, L.C. Williams & Associates  
Dennis Fields  
Barret Anderson, Clemson University  
Patrick Tyndall, AECOM  
Brian Faulkner, WK Dickson & Co., Inc  
Henry Jackson, Berkeley County  
Marya Moultrie, City of Aiken  
Ronald Hanna, City of Aiken  
Michael Conley, Kershaw County  
John Crofts AICP  
Keane McLaughlin, Cems Engineering  
Heather Garrison, City of Hartsville  
Timothy Macholl, Dorchester County  
Samantha Tipton, Waccamaw COG  
Audra Miller, York County  
Chetyl Reitz AICP  
Joseph Rogers  
Steven Eames, Hudson Sterling  
Jason Streetman, City of Seneca

## Legislative Update

*Joshua A. Stephens, SCAPA Director-At-Large/Legislative Liaison*

Despite roads dominating discussions in Columbia, members of the House and Senate failed to agree on a comprehensive solution to the state's aging road infrastructure. According to the rumor mill, legislators are going to make this issue a top priority next year. We shall see.

Both the Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) and the South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC) will begin to dive into the process of formulating their policy positions over the next months. With the recent appoint of Andrea Pietras, SCAPA's President-Elect/Programs Chair, to SCAC's Legislative Policy Committee for Transportation, Planning, and Natural Resources, SCAPA is in a unique and strong position to directly impact legislative activities in the coming year. SCAPA plans to work closely with both the MASC and SCAC to ensure planning policy remains a priority. Additionally, members of the Executive Committee plan to attend the American Planning Association's Policy and Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C. September 27- 29. This conference brings together chapters and planners from around the nation as a means to learn what policies on the national level are changing and how those policies impact our community. Additionally, it brings planners and national policy makers together to discuss how planning oriented policies make great communities happen. Follow this link for more information about APA's Policy and Advocacy Conference: <https://www.planning.org/policy/conference/>

SCAPA will continue to monitor and provide updates on planning and local government related legislation throughout the year. If you would like to dive into legislative issues you can utilize the tools provided by the SCAC ([www.sccounties.org](http://www.sccounties.org)), MASC ([www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc)), the APA (<https://www.planning.org/policy/>) and the South Carolina General Assembly (<http://www.scstatehouse.gov>) as resources.

## Becoming the Ultimate Planning Professional

*Kendra Cobbs, SCAPA Professional Development Officer*

We all know that the title Planner encompasses a multitude of specialties and functions. A Planner can fulfill responsibilities in fields ranging from community development to transportation to historic preservation to urban design to economic development, and the list goes on. Despite what your specialization may be, or even if you don't specialize in an area, being the best Planner you can be means connecting with people in your community and helping them to develop solutions to issues and problems. The ability to do that requires certain skills that are prudent for any thoughtful Planner to learn.

In addition to a formal educational background, planners should possess a unique combination of skills that enhance their professional success. Because planning is a dynamic and diverse profession, individual skills vary depending on a planner's role and specialization. Successful planners should possess a combination of these skills:

- Knowledge of urban spatial structure or physical design and the way in which cities work;
- Ability to analyze demographic information to discern trends in population, employment, and health;
- Knowledge of plan-making and project evaluation;
- Mastery of techniques for involving a wide range of people in making decisions;
- Understanding of local, state, and federal government programs and processes;
- Understanding of the social and environmental impacts of planning decisions on communities;
- Ability to work with the public and articulate planning issues to a wide variety of audiences;
- Ability to function as a mediator or facilitator when community interests conflict;
- Understanding of the legal foundation for land use regulation;
- Understanding of the interaction among the economy, transportation, health and human services, and land use regulation;
- Ability to solve problems using a balance of technical competence, creativity, and hardheaded pragmatism;
- Ability to envision alternatives to the physical and social environments in which we live; and
- Mastery of geographic information systems and office software.

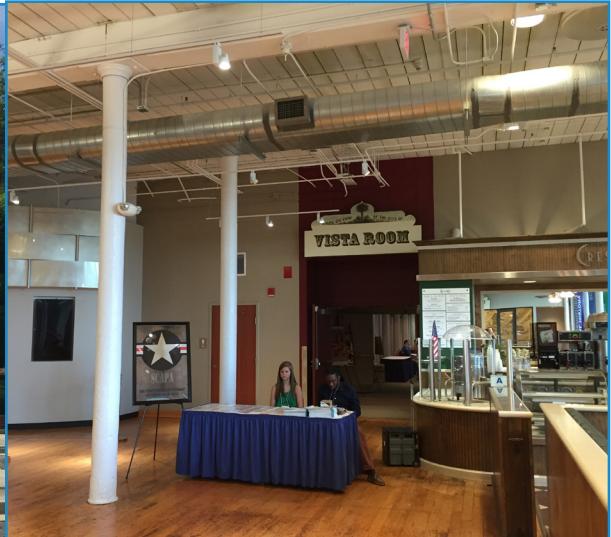
*Adapted from the American Planning Association*

# #SCAPAinCOLA was a Great Success!



Did you have a chance to be at the SC State Museum on July 30th for the 2015 SCAPA Summer Conference? If not, you missed a great day of sessions focused on collaboration and coordination across all planning fields. We had the best attendance for a one-day conference thus far with over 150 attendees! Better yet, attendees were able to not just network between sessions the old-fashioned way; the event was live tweeted and attendees and presenters alike were joining the dialogue via #SCAPAinCOLA. SCAPA conferences continue to draw large crowds, and sessions continually evolve to stay relevant for planning professionals and students. If you missed out on July 30, all of the presentations from the day can be viewed at [www.scapa.org](http://www.scapa.org).

We hope that you join us in October for the Fall Conference on the USS Yorktown. The three-day conference is guaranteed to be just as fun as it is educational with a Top Gun themed Welcome Reception and Dinner and a Lowcountry themed President's Reception.



***See you at the  
Fall Conference  
on the  
USS Yorktown!***

**Oct. 14-16, 2015  
Mount Pleasant, SC**

**Register [HERE](#)**

# Congratulations!

The following SCAPA members PASSED the May 2015 AICP Exam:

Michele Canon  
Tanya DeOliveira  
Christopher Pettit  
Abbie Rickoff  
Michael Robertson  
Carroll Williamson

Eleven SCAPA members took the May 2015 exam. Of those who took the exam, 55% passed. On a national average, 556 APA members took the May 2015 exam with a 68% pass rate.

## SAVE THE DATE FOR THE FALL SCAPA CONFERENCE!



**When: October 14 - 16, 2015**  
**Where: USS Yorktown at Patriots Point, Mount Pleasant**  
*Explore the Town of Mount Pleasant AND the USS Yorktown!*

Can't afford to attend a conference? SCAPA offers scholarships! Three scholarships are available for the fall conference. The deadline to apply is October 1.

For more details and how to apply, visit:

<http://scapa.org/conference-scholarships/>

## News from the Clemson University MCRP Program



*Cliff Ellis, Ph.D., MCRP Program Director*

Graduation day at Clemson University was May 8 and five MCRP students received their diplomas. The May 2015 graduates are Mengjie Han, Lawrence Holdsworth, Blakely Jarrett, Grant Sparks, and Peter Wearstler

Every year the MCRP Program gives out six awards recognizing both academic performance and service to the program. The awards for 2015 are as follows:

- American Institute of Certified Planners Award: Grant Sparks
- Faculty Award for a Second Year Student: Lawrence Holdsworth
- Citation in City and Regional Planning—Second Year Award: Blakely Jarrett
- The Debbie Lieu Memorial Award: John Taylor
- Citation in City and Regional Planning—First Year Award: Ashley Pruitt
- Edward L. Falk Citation for Merit: Natalia Rosario

The MCRP Program will have a large incoming class in Fall 2015 with 20 new students expected to begin their studies. Almost half of these are international students. There will also be the 15 returning students of the second-year class. Natalia Rosario will serve as the President of Clemson's Planning Student Organization for 2015-2016.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, the second-year MCRP students completed their Professional Studio project titled *Upstate Comprehensive Plan Analysis*. This was a collaborative effort with Ten at the Top, the Upstate's regional visioning organization. Using GIS the students created a combined Future Land Use map for all ten counties in the Upstate region. This product is a visualization of the region's planned growth patterns and will allow each county to see the compatibility of its future plans with neighboring counties and municipalities. The analysis paints a regional picture of multi-jurisdictional issues. The document also includes a SWOT analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the Upstate, along with "county snapshots" for each of the Upstate's counties. These are designed as readable summaries of each county's key assets and defining features. Overall, this report will make it easier to recognize which elements are in agreement among the majority of plans, thereby defining opportunities for collaboration on critical issues between jurisdictions.

The Professional Studio project for the upcoming year will involve creating neighborhood plans for two Greenville neighborhoods: Greater Sullivan and Pleasant Valley. The studio will be conducted with the assistance of the City of Greenville Community Development Division.

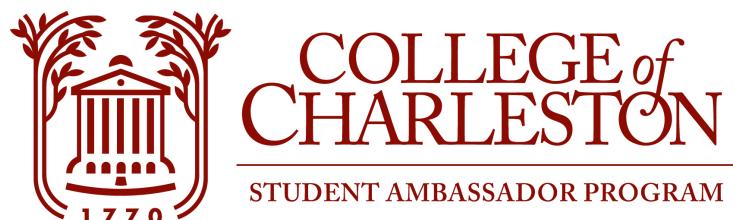
# Update from the College of Charleston Urban Studies Program

Kevin Keenan, Ph.D., Program Director, Urban Studies Program

School is out for the summer, but the Urban Studies Program continues to progress. This summer, the pieces have fallen into place for a new program that will be offered jointly between the Urban Studies Program at the College of Charleston and the Joseph P. Riley Center for Livable Communities. I would like to take this opportunity to describe this exciting new program to the SCAPA membership, and invite your support and engagement with the first group of ambassadors. Hopefully, these students will become part of the next generation of planners in South Carolina!

The **Student Ambassador Program** is a three-year, credit-bearing academic program that begins in the student's sophomore year, and continues until the senior year. Any student at the College can apply to be admitted to this program, regardless of the student's major. The purpose of the program is to link 10 sophomore students to the study of urban policy and planning issues in the Lowcountry of South Carolina—an area that is experiencing rapid growth along with the concomitant social, environmental, and economic problems. The program will be structured via Urban Studies credits offered each year through the Urban Studies Program: 1 credit in the fall and 2 in the spring.

The sophomore year is a foundational year, beginning with policy lectures focused on various issues affecting the City of Charleston and its surrounding communities. For this fall semester, several noted policy leaders, in the areas of policing, community development, planning, and urban education among many others, will deliver lectures to the students. In the spring semester, the 10 students will rotate within three non-profit organizations where they will work on solutions to prob-



lems emerging as a result of rapid and sustained growth. This first year in the program will provide a strong foundation for students to understand the policy issues that in turn affect planning.

In the junior year, the students will again follow a 1-credit/2-credit sequence in the fall and spring. In the fall semester, the students will learn applied skills, such as grant writing, website design, and how to write a press release. In the spring, the students will conduct a formal policy analysis, complete with recommendations for change in a community experiencing some problem. Importantly, the goal of the junior year program is to link the students to a community mentor—someone who is a professional in the field of either urban planning or policy. The mentor will help the student develop as a young professional, and will provide guidance and advice to the student on career development and other aspects of the field. In the senior year, the student will ideally find an internship with the help of his or her mentor, or via the student's own initiative.

Principle 3(f) of the AICP code of ethics and professional conduct asks the planning community to "contribute time and resources to the professional development of students, interns, beginning professionals, and other colleagues." The College of Charleston Urban Studies Program will welcome the engagement of the planning community in this new endeavor, whether as policy lecturers, mentors, benefactors, or in any other capacity. The Student Ambassador Program at the College of Charleston provides a great opportunity for planners to participate in shaping the next generation of city and regional planning and policy experts!

## Retiring in 2015? OR Do you know someone who is or has retired this year? SCAPA wants to know!

Please email Andrea Harris-Long, SCAPA Communications Officer, at [aharris@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:aharris@charlestoncounty.org) to let her know that you or your colleagues either have retired or plan to retire in 2015. SCAPA would like to recognize our 2015 retiring professionals at the Fall 2015 SCAPA Conference. Please email by October 1, 2015.

# UPCOMING CONTINUING EDUCATION EVENTS

## Race and Urban Planning: The North, The South

*Submitted by Kevin Keenan, PhD, AICP, College of Charleston*

The College of Charleston Urban Studies Program has invited FAICP June Thomas Manning, PhD, to visit the College of Charleston on **September 21 at 3:00 PM** in the Admissions Auditorium (66 George Street, Charleston, SC) to discuss race and urban planning. Objectives of this presentation include:

- To review which ethical principles relate to race and social justice, and why these were formulated;
- To describe why redevelopment in particular has proven historically contentious in diverse racial contexts, and how this situation has evolved in recent years;
- To present a few maps and graphs that show continuing patterns of racial segregation in metropolitan areas and to discuss how and why these vary by city and region, as well as their implications; and
- To note why equal-access provision of housing continues to be an important area of concern related to race and social justice, with brief mention of the efforts of fair housing initiatives.

A reception will follow the presentation. CM Credit for the event is pending approval. If you have any questions about the event, contact Kevin Keenan at [keenank@cofc.edu](mailto:keenank@cofc.edu).

## South Carolina Clean Energy Business Alliance Business Roundtable

*Submitted by Carolee Williams, AICP, City of Charleston*

Plan to attend the South Carolina Clean Energy Business Alliance's next Business Roundtable featuring David Gabrielson and Jessica Bailey of PACENow where they'll discuss Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (CPACE) financing options for South Carolina. Events are happening in Charleston on **October 29th** and Greenville on **October 30th**.

REGISTER HERE:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/scceba-business-roundtable-cpace-opportunities-for-south-carolina-tickets-18438241276>

CPACE is an energy efficiency and clean energy financing option for over 1,700 communities in the United States. While South Carolina doesn't have any participating CPACE communities today, we hope that will change with pending legislation introduced to the South Carolina General Assembly earlier this year.

This Business Roundtable is ideal for Elected Municipal Officials, Community Development Financial Institutions, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Service Providers, Business Leaders and the general public.

We'll be joined by David Gabrielson of PACENow, a non-profit advocate for PACE financing based in Pleasantville, New York and Jessica Bailey of Green Works Lending and PACENow Board Member.

For more information, visit: <http://www.scceba.org/upcoming-events/>

*Continued from page 1.*

to hire extra police and clean-up crews. Sustainable tourism is lower volume, lower impact, but higher yield.

To understand mass market tourism, think about mega hotels, theme parks, chain stores and the new generation of enormous (4,000 to 5,000 passenger) cruise ships. Mass market tourism is about quantity. Mass market tourism is also about environments that are artificial, homogenized, generic and formulaic. In contrast, sustainable tourism is about quality. Its focus is places that are authentic, specialized, unique and home grown. To understand sustainable tourism, think about unspoiled scenery, locally-owned businesses, historic small towns and walkable urban neighborhoods.

Like most states, South Carolina spends millions of dollars on tourism marketing and promotion. Marketing is important because it helps to create demand. It promotes visitation. It identifies and segments potential visitors and provides information about a community and its attractions.

Yet, tourism involves a lot more than marketing. It also involves making destinations more appealing. This means identifying, preserving and enhancing a community's natural and cultural assets, in other words, protecting its heritage and environment. It is after all, the unique architecture, culture, or natural beauty of a community or region that attracts tourists in the first place.

In today's global marketplace, competition for tourism dollars is fierce. If the destination is too crowded, too commercial or too much like every other place, then why go? The best marketing a community can have is word of mouth. This occurs when the reality of the place meets or exceeds the mental image that visitors have been sold through marketing and promotion. Creation of a false image can spoil a vacation. What's more it can reduce repeat visitation. Tourists may come once, but they won't come back.

The truth is, the more South Carolina communities come to look and feel just like every other place, the less reason there is to visit. On the other hand, the more a community does to enhance its uniqueness, the more people will want to visit. This is why local land use planning and community design standards are so important.

To attract and retain tourists, local officials need to become much more aware of the overall character of their community. This is because studies reveal significant differences between resident and tourist perceptions of a community. Tourists are open and receptive to everything they see, while longtime residents tend to tune out the familiar environments along the roads they travel day in and day out.

So how can South Carolina communities attract tourists and their dollars without losing their soul? Here are ten recommendations:

## SC Tourism by the Numbers

**\$18.1  
BILLION**

*Amount travelers spent in South Carolina in 2013.*

**167,280**

*Number of jobs supported by travel expenditures (10% of total private industry employment)*

*Tax revenue generated from domestic travel*

**\$1.3  
BILLION**

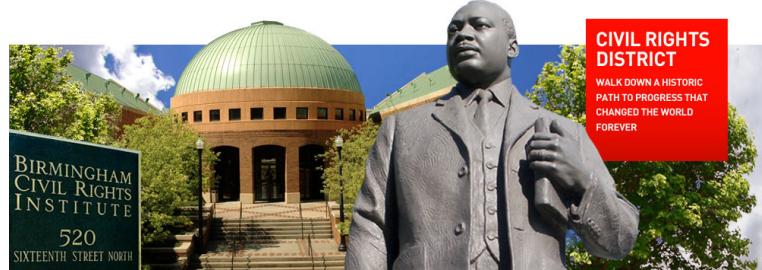
***Preserve historic buildings, neighborhoods and landscapes.*** A city without a past is like a man without a memory. Preserving historic buildings is important because they are the physical manifestations of our past. They tell us who we are and where we came from. Saving the historic buildings and landscapes of South Carolina is about saving the heart and soul of South Carolina. It is also about economic competitiveness. Travel writer Arthur Frommer put it this way: "Among cities with no particular recreational appeal, those that have preserved their past continue to enjoy tourism. Those that haven't receive almost no tourism at all. Tourism simply won't go to a city or town that has lost its soul."

Try to imagine Aiken without its Live Oak trees, Cowpens without the battlefield, Charleston without King Street or the Battery, Georgetown without Main Street, or Greenville without the West End District. These communities would be lesser places, but they would also be diminished as tourism destinations.

Preservation minded communities like Beaufort, Charleston, and Savannah are all leading tourism destinations precisely because they have protected their unique architectural heritage. By contrast, cities that have obliterated their past attract few tourists or their dollars.

***Focus on the authentic.*** Communities should make every effort to preserve the authentic aspects of local heritage and culture, including food, art, music, handicrafts, architecture, landscape and traditions. Sustainable tourism emphasizes the real over the artificial. It recognizes that the true story of a place is worth telling, even if it is painful or disturbing.

For example, in Birmingham, Alabama, where I grew up, the Civil Rights Museum and Historic District tell the story of the city's turbulent history during the civil rights era. This authentic representation of the city's past adds value and appeal to Birmingham as a destination, and the museum and surrounding historic district have proved popular with visitors from all over the world.



In Virginia, the Crooked Road Heritage Music Trail is another great example of an authentic attraction rooted in local tradition. The driving route along US 58 connects major heritage music venues in Southwest Virginia and it showcases the traditional gospel, bluegrass and mountain music indigenous to the region. Annual festivals, weekly concerts, live radio shows and informal jam sessions abound throughout the region and these events attract locals and tourists alike. The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor is another example.

***Ensure that tourism support facilities are compatible with their surroundings.*** Tourists need places to eat and sleep. They also appreciate the dependable levels of service and accommodation usually found in American hotels and motels. But tourists, wherever they go, also crave integrity of place - and homogenous "off-the-shelf" corporate chain and franchise architecture works against integrity of place and reduces a community's appeal as a tourist destination. According to travel analyst Henry Harteveldt, "Today's travelers want authenticity as well as reliability."

Today hotel chains are making a greater effort to "fit in" with local communities and they are reusing and recycling more older buildings. Hotel chains are now repurposing buildings like warehouses, hospitals and office buildings for use as hotels. The Cotton Exchange Hotel in New Orleans is one example. Another example of a chain hotel that fits in with a local community is the Hampton Inn in Lexington, Virginia. Instead of building a generic chain hotel out by the interstate, the owners of the Lexington Hampton Inn converted an 1827 manor house, the Col Alto Mansion, into the centerpiece of a 76 room hotel within walking distance of historic downtown Lexington.

In some cases, historic hotels have become the centerpiece of downtown revitalization efforts. The Martha Washington Inn in Abingdon, Virginia; the Mission Inn in Riverside, California; and the Westin Poinsett Hotel in Greenville are three examples.

Bob Gibbs, one of the nation's leading real estate market analysts says, "When a chain store or franchise comes to town they generally have three designs (A, B and C) ranging from Anywhere USA to Unique (sensitive to local character). Which one gets built depends heavily upon how much push back the company gets from local residents and officials about design and its importance." One example of a national chain constructing a community friendly building in South Carolina is the McDonald's in the Vista Neighborhood of Columbia.

Design is, of course, critically important for communities trying to compete in the tourism marketplace. Tourism is the sum total of the travel experience. It is not just what happens at a museum or a festival. It is also about the places that tourists eat and sleep; the roads they drive down; the main street they shop on and so forth.

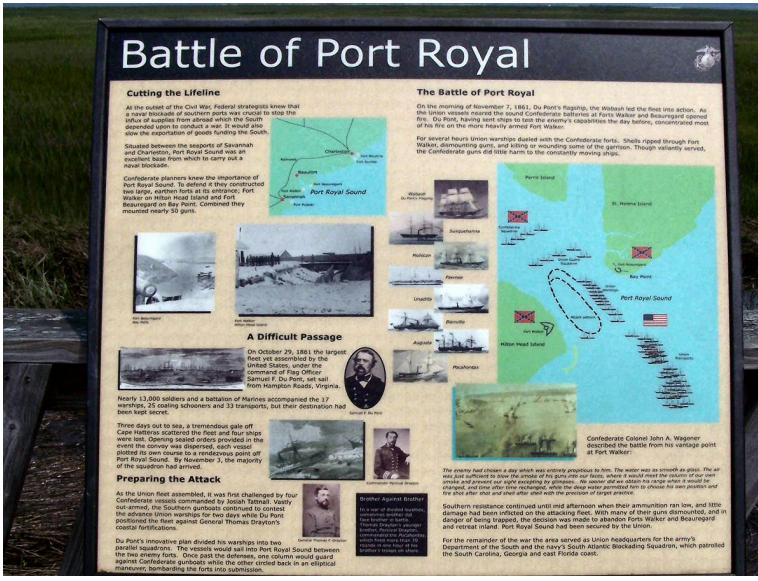


*McDonald's on Gervais Street in Columbia*

Every new development should have a harmonious relationship with its setting. Tourism support facilities should reflect the broader environmental context of the community and should respect the specific size, character and functional factors of their site within the surrounding landscape. A community's food and lodging facilities are part of the total tourism package. Hotels should reflect a city and not each other. Hotels in South Carolina, should be different from those in Mississippi, Maine, Missouri, Montana or Morocco.

***Interpret the resource.*** Education and interpretation are other keys to sustainable tourism. Visitors want information about what they are seeing and interpretation can be a powerful storytelling tool that can make an exhibit, an attraction, even an entire community come alive. It can also result in better-managed resources by explaining why they are important. Interpretation instills respect and fosters stewardship. Education about natural and cultural resources can instill community pride and strengthen sense of place.

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania developed a community-wide interpretation program that involves public art, wayside exhibits and interpretive markers that tell the story of the town and its role in the Battle of Gettysburg. They did this, after they realized that most tourists were driving around the national park and then leaving town without realizing that the town itself was a big part of the story. Since the interpretative pro-



*Interpretive marker in Port Royal, South Carolina*

gram was completed, the number of visitors spending time and money in downtown Gettysburg has measurably increased.

The City of Richmond, Virginia is another community that has done a great job of telling its story. The Richmond Slave Trail, for example, is a walking trail that chronicles the trade of enslaved Africans from Africa to Virginia until 1775 and away from Virginia until 1865. There are numerous historic markers along the route that explain the various sites and cast new light on a dark chapter of American history.

**Protect Community Gateways.** First impressions matter. Just like with meeting a person, a good first impression is important and a bad first impression is hard to change. Some South Carolinian communities pay attention to their gateways. Others do not. Many communities have gotten used to ugliness, accepting it as inevitable to progress. More enlightened communities recognize that community appearance is important. It affects a community's image and its economic well being. I'll never forget how charmed I was on my first visit to New Market, Virginia – a Norman Rockwell sort of town in the Shenandoah Valley. Nor will I forget how disappointed I was on a later visit to find giant fast food and gas station signs towering over the town's historic buildings, obliterating the scenery and diminishing the town's appeal as a tourist destination.

Downtown is the heart of most South Carolina communities, but the commercial corridors leading to downtown are the front door. Corridor enhancements are critical to making a good first impression. Commercial corridors are also one of the best redevelopment opportunities. Davidson, North Carolina, for example, has used a form based code to incentivize redevelopment along the roads leading into town. Unsightly auto-oriented development is now being replaced by walkable, mixed use development.

**Control Outdoor Signs.** Protecting scenic views and vistas, planting street trees, and landscaping parking lots all make economic sense, but controlling outdoor signs is probably the most important step that a South Carolina community can take to make an immediate visible improvement in its physical environment. This is because almost nothing will destroy the distinctive character of a community faster than uncontrolled signs and billboards. Sign clutter is ugly, ineffective and expensive. When the streetscape becomes overloaded with signs, the cumulative effect is negative. The viewer actually sees less, not more. Almost all of America's premier tourist destinations, like Hilton Head and Kiawah Island, have strong sign ordinances because they understand that attractive communities attract more business than ugly ones.

**Enhance the journey as well as the destination.** As previously mentioned, tourism is the sum total of the travel experience. It is not just what happens at the destination. It involves



*Signs along I-95, advertising to airplanes, rather than people*

everything that people see and do from the time they leave home until the trip is over. Getting there can be half the fun, but frequently it is not.

There are many great destinations in America; however, there are very few noteworthy journeys left. Except for a few special roads like the Blue Ridge Parkway, driving along a typical American highway can be a profoundly depressing experience. Former author and television commentator Charles Kuralt put it this way: "Thanks to the interstate highway system, it is now possible to drive across the country from coast to coast, without seeing anything." Tourists, of course, want to see places that are different, unusual and unique. This is why it is in the interest of state and local officials to encourage development of heritage corridors, bike paths, rail trails, greenways and scenic byways.

**Get tourists out of their cars.** If you design a community or a development around cars, you will get more cars, but if you design a community around people, you will get more pedestrians. Walkability is very good for business, especially for tourism-oriented businesses. In fact, it is hard to spend money when you are in a car, so getting people out of cars is key to sustainable tourism and increased business. The best way to get people out of their cars is to create places that people can safely walk or bike in attractive settings. The Harborwalk in Georgetown, South Carolina, the Riverwalk in Greenville and the North Augusta Greenway in Aiken County all demonstrate how walkability can increase profitability.

**Link sites together.** Very few small towns or rural communities can attract out-of-state tourists or international visitors on their own, but linked with other communities, they can become a coherent and powerful attraction. The "Blues Highway" in Mississippi (AKA US 61) connects Memphis to New Orleans and passes through numerous small towns in the Mississippi Delta. Few of these towns would attract large numbers of tourists on their own, but collectively, they each tell a small part of the larger story of America's musical history. Birding trails, wildlife trails, craft trails and Civil War Heritage Trails are all other examples of this concept.

The South Carolina National Heritage Area has provided a framework for promoting and interpreting historic sites in seventeen counties extending from the Upstate to the Atlantic Ocean. The heritage corridor promotes and interprets the state's diverse history, telling the story of European settlement, agriculture, African-American history, the Civil War, the American Revolution and more. It has helped breath new life into many small towns in South Carolina

**Recognize that tourism has limits and must be managed.** Savvy communities always ask how many tourists are too many. Tourism development that exceeds the carrying capacity of an ecosystem or that fails to respect a community's sense of place will result in resentment by local residents and the eventual destruction of the very attributes that attracted tourists in the first place. Too many cars, tour buses, condominiums or people can overwhelm a community and harm fragile resources.

Responsible tourism requires planning and management. Annapolis, Maryland; Williamsburg, Virginia; and Charleston, South Carolina are three examples of communities with tourism management plans. In Charleston, for example, the City prohibits large tour buses in the neighborhood South of Broad Street, known as the Battery. It also directs travelers to the city's visitor center, which is located well away from historic residential neighborhoods that were being overrun by tourists. It has also built new attractions, like the South Carolina Aquarium, in underserved areas of the city, instead of concentrating everything in one or two overcrowded neighborhoods



*The Greenville Riverwalk*

**Summary.** In recent years, South Carolina tourism has had steadily less to do with South Carolina and more to do with mass marketing. As farms, forests, and open lands decrease, advertising dollars increase. As historic buildings disappear, billboards proliferate. As main streets come back to life, congested commercial corridors spread on the outskirts of our towns. Unless the tourism industry thinks it can continue to sell trips to communities clogged with traffic, look-a-like motels, overcrowded beaches and cluttered commercial strips, it needs to create a plan to preserve the natural, cultural and scenic resources upon which it relies.

Tourism is about more than marketing. It is also about protecting and enhancing the product we are trying to promote. Citizens, elected officials and developers alike can take a leadership role in creating a sustainable tourism agenda that will strengthen the South Carolina economy, while at the same time preserving the natural and cultural assets that make it unique.

## Interested in Tourism Management Plans?

Click on the links below to access examples.

[Charleston, SC Tourism Management Plan](#)

[Williamsburg, VA Economic Development Plan](#)

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