

# VISION 2020

**STRATEGIC PLAN** 2020-2025



# WE ARE VISITHATTIESBURG

## OUR MISSION

To actively position Hattiesburg as a year-round premier leisure and business destination in the Gulf South.

## OUR VISION

To ignite tourism economic growth in Hattiesburg through strategic vision and collaborative leadership while enhancing local quality of life.

## OUR VALUES

The VisitHATTIESBURG team strives to be efficient, productive and professional with a commitment to hospitality excellence and attention to detail while always keeping VisitHATTIESBURG’s mission top of mind.

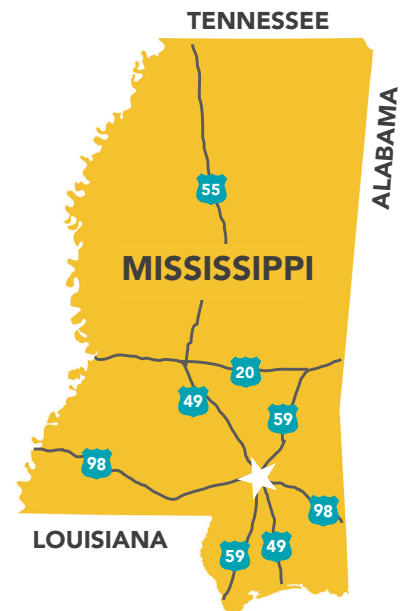
## OUR FOCUS AREAS

 **GROW TOURISM’S ECONOMIC IMPACT IN HBURG**

 **COMMUNICATE AND AMPLIFY THE HBURG STORY**

 **STRENGTHEN PARTNER NETWORK & COLLABORATION**

 **PRIORITIZE PLACEMAKING AND ENHANCE THE HBURG EXPERIENCE**



# TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT

## MISSISSIPPI FY17

23.15 million visitors  
 \$6.34 billion spent by visitors  
 87,335 direct jobs  
 \$398.7 million in General Fund revenue attributed to tourism

## HATTIESBURG METRO AREA

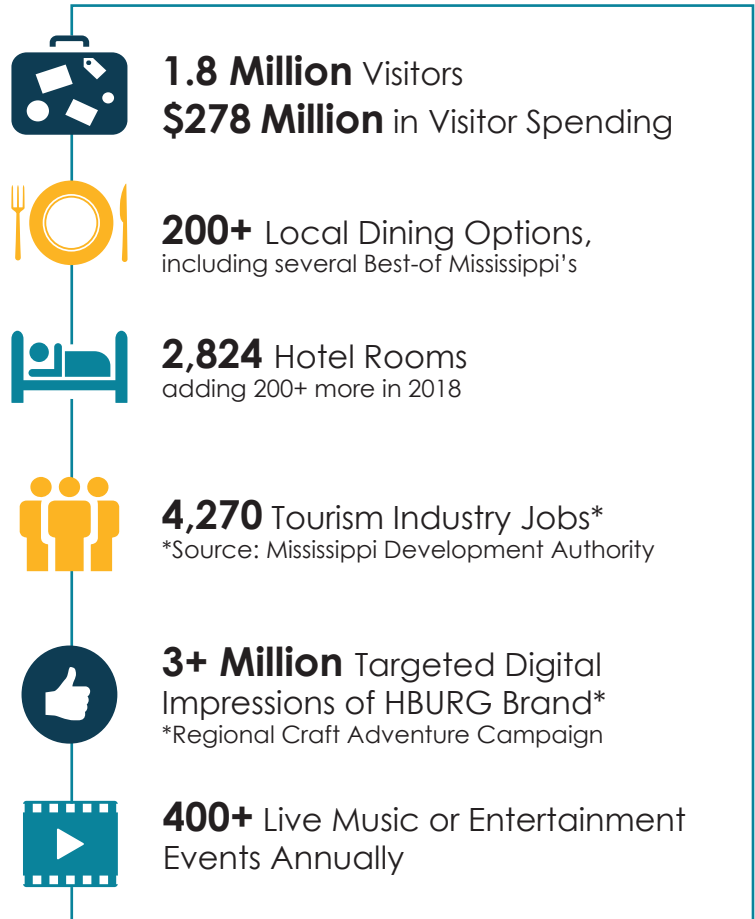
\$278,090,099 in visitor expenditures  
 4,270 direct jobs (6.7% of total employment)  
 \$25,759,988 in state/local taxes/fees attributed to tourism







## HOW IS VISITHATTIESBURG FUNDED?

Through the provision of tax dollars, the State Legislature first created the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission for the purposes of promoting and marketing Hattiesburg's tourism assets. The Hattiesburg Tourism Commission is funded by a 2% tax on the gross proceeds from hotel overnight room rental.

## TOURISM COMMISSIONERS

- Frank James, Chair, Hotel Industry Representative
- Anthony Harris, P.E., Economic Development Representative
- Melanie Archer, Accommodations Industry Representative
- Fei Xue, Ph.D., University of Southern Mississippi
- Bonnie Warren, At-Large
- Michael Makrs, At-Large
- Shawn Lowery, At-Large



-  **1.8 Million** Visitors  
**\$278 Million** in Visitor Spending
-  **200+** Local Dining Options, including several Best-of Mississippi's
-  **2,824** Hotel Rooms adding 200+ more in 2018
-  **4,270** Tourism Industry Jobs\*  
\*Source: Mississippi Development Authority
-  **3+ Million** Targeted Digital Impressions of HBURG Brand\*  
\*Regional Craft Adventure Campaign
-  **400+** Live Music or Entertainment Events Annually

2017 ECONOMIC IMPACT IN HBURG

## VisitHATTIESBURG TEAM

- Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director
- Kristen Brock, Director of Programs & Promotions
- Paige Robertson, Director of Communications & Digital Strategies

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## VISION 2020

VisitHATTIESBURG's operations strategies and activities focus on four specific core values. Each core value specifies goals and outlines tactics to achieve those goals.

## GROW TOURISM'S ECONOMIC IMPACT IN HBURG

### GOAL

Grow tourism's local economic impact through specific target markets to increase occupancy rates and revenue within Hattiesburg's hotel and hospitality sector for both business and leisure travel.

HBURG market sectors:

- a. Meetings and Associations
- b. Leisure Travel
- c. Outdoor / Sports
- d. Motorcoach / Group Tour

## MEETINGS AND ASSOCIATIONS

### GOAL

Hattiesburg's meeting space is varied in both size and amenities offered. The addition of a full-service hotel with 5,000 square feet of meeting space allows Hattiesburg to meet the demand of meeting and sleeping rooms under the same roof. A new hotel in Midtown offers lodging in close proximity to USM's state-of-the-art meeting space.

### KEY TACTICS

- Maintain active membership in MSAE by attending Member2Member events, Lunch & Learns and the annual meeting.
- Conduct two sales blitzes a year that focus on the association market.
- Research potential small market meeting trade shows to attend.
- Foster relationships with local associations and clubs to host their meetings in Hattiesburg.
- Offer Red Carpet Services to Meeting Planners.

## **LEISURE TRAVEL**

### **GOAL**

To convert transient leisure travelers into overnight visitors to Hattiesburg by sharing offerings and positioning Hattiesburg as the perfect getaway. In addition to domestic leisure travel, begin pursuing the international FIT market.

### **KEY TACTICS**

- Continue aggressive digital marketing campaign in feeder markets.
- Research potential consumer trade shows to attend.
- Promote signature HBURG events to target markets.
- Work with partners to create packages with existing themed itineraries for ease of booking.
- Foster partnership with neighboring destinations (Meridian, Jackson and the Mississippi Gulf Coast) to create itineraries that appeal to the international traveler.
- Attend Travel South International Showcase with Meridian.

## **OUTDOOR / SPORTS / YOUTH**

### **GOAL**

Hattiesburg's amenities are perfect for the soft-adventure traveler. Assets include the Longleaf Trace for cycling, the DeSoto National Forest for canoeing and kayaking, four golf courses and multiple sports fields.

### **KEY TACTICS**

- Research potential youth sports trade show to attend.
- Continue and expand relationship with Hattie 100 and market to participants when they are in Hattiesburg.
- Continue and expand relationship with Rise and Shine Marathon and market to participants when they are in Hattiesburg.
- Establish a relationship with HYSA and other local organizations.
- Establish a relationship with local golf courses and work to coordinate packages with hoteliers.
- Market and strategically advertise the newly created Art & Architecture cycling tour.

## **MOTORCOACH / GROUP TOUR**

### **GOAL**

The motorcoach market has been largely untapped in Hattiesburg in recent years. The goal to grow this market and increase overnight stays at Hattiesburg hotels.

## KEY TACTICS

- Attend trade shows focused on the group tour market including but not limited to, Travel South Domestic Showcase, Spotlight on the Southeast, Select Traveler and South Central Motorcoach Association.
  - Work with Visit Mississippi, the state's official tourism office, to host group tour operator FAM trips.
  - Pursue all leads from Visit Mississippi including trade shows and welcome center motorcoach reports.
  - Leverage relationships built at Travel South Domestic Showcase in 2018.
  - Maintain contact with group tour operators throughout the year.
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## COMMUNICATE AND AMPLIFY THE HBURG STORY

### GOAL

Develop and implement an comprehensive marketing plan promoting Hattiesburg as a visitor destination, increasing overnight stays and total visitor spending.

### KEY TACTICS

- Grow HBURG's digital presence with fresh authentic, content promoting Hattiesburg's attractions and accommodations.
  - Competitively position Hattiesburg as premier business and leisure tourism destination in the South through a comprehensive marketing plan and public relations plan.
  - Produce a weekly newsletter, social media, blogs and videos to ensure top of mind awareness for events and new HBURG assets.
  - Cultivate earned media with travel writers and influencers to Hattiesburg.
  - Develop specific marketing for HBURG target sectors.
  - Prioritize advertsing/media placement in key target markets.
  - Create quarterly sweepstakes to promote across social media and other digital channels.
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## **STRENGTHEN**

### **PARTNER NETWORK & COLLABORATION**

#### **GOAL**

Foster and grow a strong, connected network of tourism and community partners, promoting a collective vision.

#### **KEY TACTICS**

- Develop HBURG Ambassador program.
- Host quarterly Hotel & Hospitality Association meetings.
- Strengthen local, regional and national networks through outreach and direct marketing efforts.
- Create an HBURG Restaurant Week to engage with restaurant partners.
- Establish a grant program for organizations/events that promote or produce overnight stays in Hattiesburg.
- Actively pursue partnership with the Mississippi Hotel & Lodging Association to bring back the Hattiesburg Chapter of the association.
- Offer professional development programs for area partners, in conjunction with quarterly meetings or separately.
- Pursue community partnerships for public events that strengthen the VisitHATTIESBURG brand.
- Continue to grow programs and promotions, including Mississippi's Miss Hospitality, Hattiesburg Alliance for Public Arts (HAPA), and Downtown Hattiesburg Association.

## **PRIORITIZE PLACEMAKING**

### **AND ENHANCE THE HBURG EXPERIENCE**

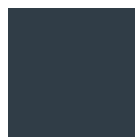
#### **GOAL**

Create a welcoming, visitor-friendly destination, offering world-class support services to business and leisure travelers.

#### **KEY TACTICS**

- Promote HBURG Red Carpet Services.
- Work in partnership on beautification projects to enhance curb appeal, including banners, planters, and branded, cohesive way-finding signage.
- Promote existing themed itineraries and create new ones.

- Collaborate with hotelstpp create themed visitor packages.
- Create tours and trails that appeal to specific market segments (cycling, etc.)
- Encourage HBURG Brand Ambassadors to be advocates and volunteers for signature HBURG events and special initiatives.
- Enhance the visitor experience by offering special promotions, such as Hattiesburg Restaurant Week or National Travel and Tourism Week, to ensure increased overnight visitation.



## **GROW TOURISM'S ECONOMIC IMPACT IN HBURG**



## **COMMUNICATE AND AMPLIFY THE HBURG STORY**



## **STRENGTHEN PARTNER NETWORK & COLLABORATION**



## **PRIORITIZE PLACEMAKING AND ENHANCE THE HBURG EXPERIENCE**



# LONG-RANGE STRATEGIC PLAN 5-YEAR PLAN FOR TOURISM

PRESENTED MARCH 2020



## RESEARCH & PLANNING

In March 2020, VisitHATTIESBURG presented its long range strategic plan to community stakeholders through individual meetings and a presentation at the Area Development Partnership's monthly meeting.

Coordinated and developed by Young Strategies, an independent research and strategic planning organization focusing on the travel industry and destinations. VisitHATTIESBURG's research and planning process took more than a year to conduct. Research included resident and visitor polls, focus groups with stakeholders in Hattiesburg's restaurant, attraction, and business sector, market analysis, and third-party tracking and mapping.

## FINDINGS

Combined, these research tactics revealed the Hattiesburg tourism industry's strengths and potential areas of improvement. It also confirmed HBURG's traveler demographics and interests, paving a path for further tourism growth in Hattiesburg.

# STRATEGY ONE

## DRIVE GROWTH IN GROUP & LEISURE

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION & GOALS



#### Leisure Marketing: Traditional/Digital

- Focus on generating new demand for rooms

Market to broad range of travel segments in contiguous states

- Active empty nesters
- Outdoors enthusiasts
- Families with kids
- Passing through

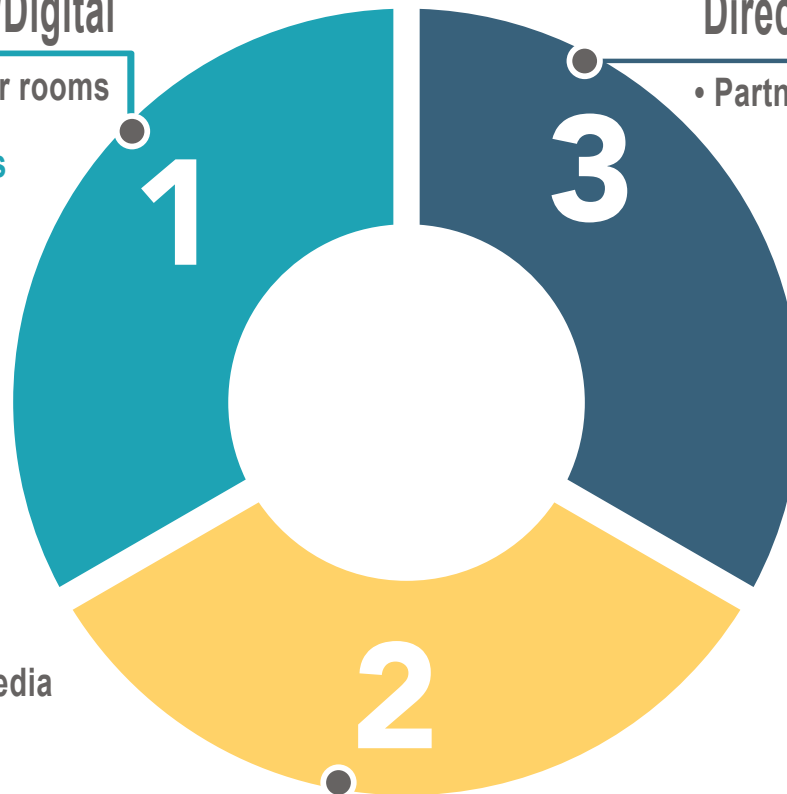
Develop strategies to fill need periods

High-quality destination brochures, guides, maps, and full digital portfolio-website, videos, blogs, e-news, social media



#### Public Relations: Travel & Local Media

- Domestic/Int'l markets earned media, civic buy-in



#### Direct Marketing: Groups

- Partnerships with hotels/event venues key

Small to medium size groups

- Corporate meetings
- Team sports
- Associations
- Events/recreation
- Education
- SMRF
- Government

Develop strategies to fill need periods

- Aggressive prospecting
- Weekday nights focus
- Market segment sales calls
- Retain existing
- Recruit new



# STRATEGY TWO CREATING A DYNAMIC DESTINATION

## NEW & UPDATED EXPERIENCES



# HATTIESBURG, MS VISITOR PROFILE

YOUNG STRATEGIES & ENTRADA INSIGHTS, 2019



**DAYTRIP 69.8% FEMALE**



**OVERNIGHT 63.8% FEMALE**



MORE THAN  
**70%**  
OF VISITORS  
SURVEYED SAID

**LOCAL DINING,  
FESTIVALS/EVENTS,  
& TOGETHERNESS**  
WERE IMPORANT  
ATTRIBUTES OF A  
DESTINATION



HBURG VISITORS TRAVEL WITH  
**TWO PEOPLE PER PARTY**  
OFTEN COUPLES WITHOUT CHILDREN

**97%** OF VISITORS  
WANT TO  
**EAT LOCAL**



**AVERAGE AGE: 48.5**  
AGE 47 DAYTRIP / 50 OVERNIGHT



**66%** OF VISITORS ARE  
**EMPTY-NESTERS**



HBURG ENTERTAINS 46%  
**SOLO TRAVELERS**  
38% COUPLES / 14% FAMILIES



**DAYTRIPPERS**

SPEND AN AVERAGE OF

**\$191.72**  
PER TRAVEL PARTY IN HBURG

**OVERNIGHTERS**

SPEND AN AVERAGE OF

**\$498.42**  
PER TRAVEL PARTY IN HBURG



HBURG VISITORS ARE



**EDUCATED**

40% DAYTRIP / 47% OVERNIGHT  
HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE

MOST VISITORS  
**DRIVE**



99% DAYTRIP / 90% OVERNIGHT

**FEEDER MARKETS: BIRMINGHAM  
MONTGOMERY, MOBILE, JACKSON  
NEW ORLEANS, DALLAS, HOUSTON  
COASTAL MS AND NONMETRO MS**

**TOP 3** VISITOR  
ACTIVITIES  
**DINING, SHOPPING &  
VISITING FRIENDS/RELATIVES**



**95.4%** VISITORS  
WOULD  
**RECOMMEND HBURG**