

Letter From the Chairman

To the Mayor, City Council and Citizens of St. Marys, Georgia

Over the past three centuries, Downtown St. Marys and its waterfront have served as a major shipping and fishing port, and housed naval facilities. As the economic center of the City, banks, restaurants, and retail stores flourished. It was once a destination for both employment and commerce.

Today, things have changed. Gone are the family-owned hardware and grocery stores, locally owned banks, and port facilities. While no longer the economic center of the City, Downtown remains its historic and cultural center.

The Downtown Development Authority's (DDA) primary objective is to encourage and assist economic development while preserving the City's historic properties and unique character. We envision the Downtown as the City's social center - a gathering place. A place where walking, biking or riding a golf cart is the primary means of transportation. A place that provides basic retail services to downtown residents while accommodating residents and visitors alike with first class restaurants and entertainment.

This annual report outlines the accom-

plishments and activities of the DDA as it moves to realize its vision and objectives. St. Marys official designation as a Main Street City is expected this Fall. Implementing the Main Street process and designation has been the DDA's principal short term objective since its reactivation in 2003. "The Main Street Approach" was developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to provide a framework for communities to use to revitalize older, traditional business districts throughout the United States. It is a common-sense way to address the variety of issues and problems that face traditional downtown areas. It advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets, including distinctive architecture, pedestrian-friendly environments, personal service, local ownership and a sense of community.

Main Street programs contain four components which are intended to build a sustainable and comprehensive community revitalization effort:

- Organization
- Promotion

- Design
- Economic Restructuring

As you read this annual report you will see that our committee structure is based on this outline. In addition to the seven appointed DDA members, dozens of volunteers serve on the committees and dozens more volunteer to assist with promotional events. So while we operate as a City department with a staff of two, our success in achieving our objectives would not be possible without the help and support of these individuals.

I encourage you to stop by the Economic Development Office to learn more details of our revitalization efforts. We'll be happy to share our adopted work plans and other products of our annual strategic planning sessions. Better yet, join us a volunteer as we work to make St. Marys downtown even a better place in which to live, work, play, shop and invest.

Sincerely,



Craig Root
Chairman

Tracking

- Discussion with potential new businesses: 34
- New Businesses opened: 16
- Businesses closed: 9
- Downtown Conference Room Reservations: 125

Trainings Attended By Staff

- Basic and Advanced DDA Training - complete board and staff
- Georgia Academy for Economic Development - Director and Assistant
- Main Street 101 - Director, Assistant & 3 members of DDA
- Carl Vinson Management & Leadership Institute - Director
- Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College - Director
- National Main Street Training - Director
- St. Marys 101 - Assistant
- Urban Redevelopment Symposium
- Georgia Downtown Conference - Director
- Tax Incentives for Land Conservation Training - Director
- Microsoft Access Class - Assistant
- Introduction to Adobe Acrobat - Director & Assistant



DDA Mission Statement

To support current businesses and encourage new business development in St. Marys. Preserve and enhance the natural beauty of St. Marys. Promote St. Marys as a destination of choice.

DDA Board of Directors

Craig Root, *Chairman*
Diane McCoy, *Vice Chairman*
Barbara Ryan
Carol Buddin
Bill Deloughy
Tom Monahan
Walt Natzic

Paula Amari,
Promotions Committee Chair

June Fischer,
Economic Development Committee Chair

Alyce Thornhill, *Executive Director*

Renée Coakley,
Administrative Assistant

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DDA Update

Summer 2007



St. Marys Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a corporate body recognized by state law and used by Georgia cities for the last four decades as an important tool in downtown development. Using the Main Street Approach, developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, St. Marys DDA is committed to bringing the heart of the community back to downtown.

Why downtown is important?

Downtown symbolizes among many things the economic health of community, the local quality of life, pride in place, public-private partnerships and the community's history. Even though the DDA represents merchants and property owners most directly affected by downtown changes it also ensures that the general community's welfare is always considered.

Melding the past with the future for a vibrant, economically-successful city core.

Committees

Organization

Accomplishments

- Administrative Assistant Hired
- Established and maintain database for volunteers, businesses and owners
- Visited and maintained contact with 61 businesses.

Goals 2007–2008

- Selling surplus city property for revitalization funding
- Identify Main Street funding opportunities
- Finalize Main Street Designation
- DDA Boundary changes to enhance funding opportunities
- Continue recruitment of volunteers
- Implement Main Street Philosophy

Promotions

Accomplishments

- Establish database for email distribution
- Hosted Hay Days event raising over \$800 for future promotions
- Hosted Chair-ity auction event raising over \$5,000 for the St. Marys Tree Board
- Hosted Live Nativity
- Website design

Goals 2007–2008

- Establish art center and artist loop website
- Continue updates for database
- Advertising Co-Op for downtown businesses
- Finalize website
- Continue public relations including press releases and promotional ads
- Establish a downtown Saturday Market



Design

Accomplishments

- Completed first draft of Design Guidelines
- SCAD students created 12 alternate "Masterplans" for Downtown St. Marys
- Designed Wheeler St. Median
- Provided architectural design assistance for five downtown projects



Goals 2007–2008

- Finalize Design Guidelines
- Façade Program
- Beautification – trash receptacles and seating
- SCAD Urban design graduate students to work on "Masterplans" for midtown in the fall
- Complete Greenprint mapping



Economic Development

Accomplishments

- Completed St. Marys Downtown Business Directory
- Hosted Georgia Alliance of Preservation Commissions (GAPC) Training, over 100 attendees with an economic impact of \$38,000 for downtown
- Recruitment of new restaurant in downtown the Salsa Grill
- Worked with Planning and Zoning for C-1 district changes to allow residence above businesses
- Worked with Planning and Zoning to make changes in the Alcohol Ordinance to support restaurant recruitment

Goals 2007–2008

- Complete economic market study of St. Marys in cooperation with other local governments
- Continue to support current businesses and business recruitment
- Finalize Employment Incentive Program Grant to expand water bottling plant in downtown
- Establish a Redevelopment Revolving loan pool
- Complete Wayfinding Assessment

