AUG

BUSINESS PLAN

2022

DESTINATION
AUGUSTA

about US

Much like our city, Destination Augusta has a history of grit and determination with an increasingly bright and optimistic outlook on the future of the city we call home. We've learned the hard way that in order to compete we've got to stay true to who we are, challenging ourselves daily to make everyone feel good about Augusta.

BENNISH BROWN

President/CEO
Destination Augusta

Introduction

IN AUGUSTA, as with many communities, the visitor industry plays an important role in local and regional economic health. Visitors to a market offer an opportunity to inject new dollars into the economy with only limited use of public infrastructure. Visitor spending then generates net new tax revenue, reducing the tax burden on locals, and creating sustainable jobs.

At the same time, the competition for visitor industry market share is fierce. Communities throughout the country, many competing with Augusta, continue to invest in assets and amenities that are designed in part to attract visitors. Augusta must remain competitive as a destination, which is why Destination Augusta initiated a community-wide process to define initiatives that can help increase visitor activity and local spending . The outreach process brought together input from representatives of the City of Augusta, Augusta University, Augusta Tomorrow, Downtown Development Authority, regional economic development organizations, Chamber of Commerce, Sports Council, Arts Council, attractions and events representatives, local developers, various state organizations and other organizations too numerous to mention. In total, over 60 individuals representing dozens of organizations participated in this process.

The extensive research culminated in Destination Blueprint for Augusta, Georgia. The Blueprint focuses on formulating and recommending destination development strategies that can help to gain market share in the tourism sector, increase overnight stays and drive exposure to new leisure and group markets. Destination Blueprint is paired with a three-year Strategic Plan for Destination Augusta. Combined, they identify the future ideal state of Augusta, and opportunities that are a priority for the organization for the upcoming years. Goals continue to be re-formulated and prioritized based on the current business, community and political landscape.

The work presented in this 2022 Business Plan are the tactics planned to accomplish the goals and recommendations of the multi-year strategic framework comprised of Destination Blueprint and the current Strategic Plan for Destination Augusta.

LEADERSHIP.
INNOVATION.
COLLABORATION.

Our VISION

» Augusta is a thriving community rich with experiences that attract people.

Our MISSION

» Destination Augusta develops and promotes our community, inspiring people to have unforgettable experiences.

Our VALUES

» Leadership

» Innovation

» Collaboration

» Fun!

2022
GOALS & PRIORITIES

» Recruit and promote meetings, events, festivals, and film productions year-round

» Keep Augusta improving to be the most attractive travel destination it can be

» Foster stakeholder alignment and collaboration

» Articulate and emotionalize Augusta's unique selling proposition

» Enhance Destination Augusta's public profile

Goal/Objective #1

★ RECRUIT AND PROMOTE MEETINGS, EVENTS, FESTIVALS, AND FILM PRODUCTIONS YEAR-ROUND

Meetings, events and festivals can generate significant visitation for a destination, strengthen its brand and benefit the local resident base. Business events are increasingly being positioned as catalysts for long-term economic development for communities. Augusta already hosts an array of large events throughout the community, and they deserve continued promotion and collaboration. There are also opportunities to support the development or recruitment of new and unique multi-day festivals and events, which can lead to increased visitation to Augusta.

We position and promote our region as a preferred destination for film and media production. We also prioritize strengthening our relationships with local filmmakers and crew to ensure mutual success and continued growth of the industry in our region. We are committed to bringing economic impact to Augusta's River Region by providing support to productions that select Augusta as their project location. Film and media productions of all varieties bring money and jobs to our city.

Key Results

GENERATE HIGHLY-INTERESTED NEW GROUP BUSINESS PROSPECTS BY GROWING AWARENESS OF AUGUSTA AS AN IDEAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS DESTINATION IN THE SOUTHEAST

Initiatives

» Execute integrated paid media campaigns targeted to meeting planners

» Enhance Augusta's presence at tradeshows

» Develop marketing tools and collateral for meetings, conventions, and event recruitment. (i.e., Meetings Facilities Guide, bid presentation template, one-sheets, tradeshow displays, and promotional items)

» Prospect and recruit meetings within the specific markets of tech/cyber, faith and associations

Key Results

GROW ATTENDANCE, SPENDING AND OVERNIGHT VISITATION DURING PRIORITIZED FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Initiatives

» Develop and drive traffic to enhanced festival and events landing pages to increase awareness and interest in attending

» Implement social media takeovers with event organizers and/or local influencers to showcase the festival/event

» Communicate event value to key stakeholders with the goal of enhanced focus and commitment to helping events in Augusta succeed

» Pursue specific meetings relevant to existing festivals and events

Key Results

CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS AND COMMUNITY IMPACT OF THE INAUGURAL INTERNATIONAL SOUL FESTIVAL

Initiatives

- » Manage partnership with vendor for expected deliverables
- » Utilize Augusta & Co. to promote the festival
- » Support promotional needs with supplemental marketing and social media
- » Identify, contact, and sell the experience to appropriate groups to host their meeting/event in Augusta at the time of the festival
- » Identify meeting planners to attend a familiarization trip around the Festival

Key Results

POSITION AUGUSTA AS ONE OF THE TOP FOUR FILM PRODUCTION HUBS IN GEORGIA

Initiatives

- » Prospect and recruit for productions by hosting familiarization trips for industry professionals, marketing Augusta at select film events, and using industry associations for business-to-business meetings and education
- » Support growth of the local film industry workforce
  - » Work with Georgia Film Academy (GFA) and Augusta Tech to promote GFA classes to students
- » Explore Studio Facility Plan - Public/Private Partnership
- » Create a long-range plan to grow Film Augusta funding, employ a full-time staff person, and create local incentives
- » Enhance Film Augusta's digital presence
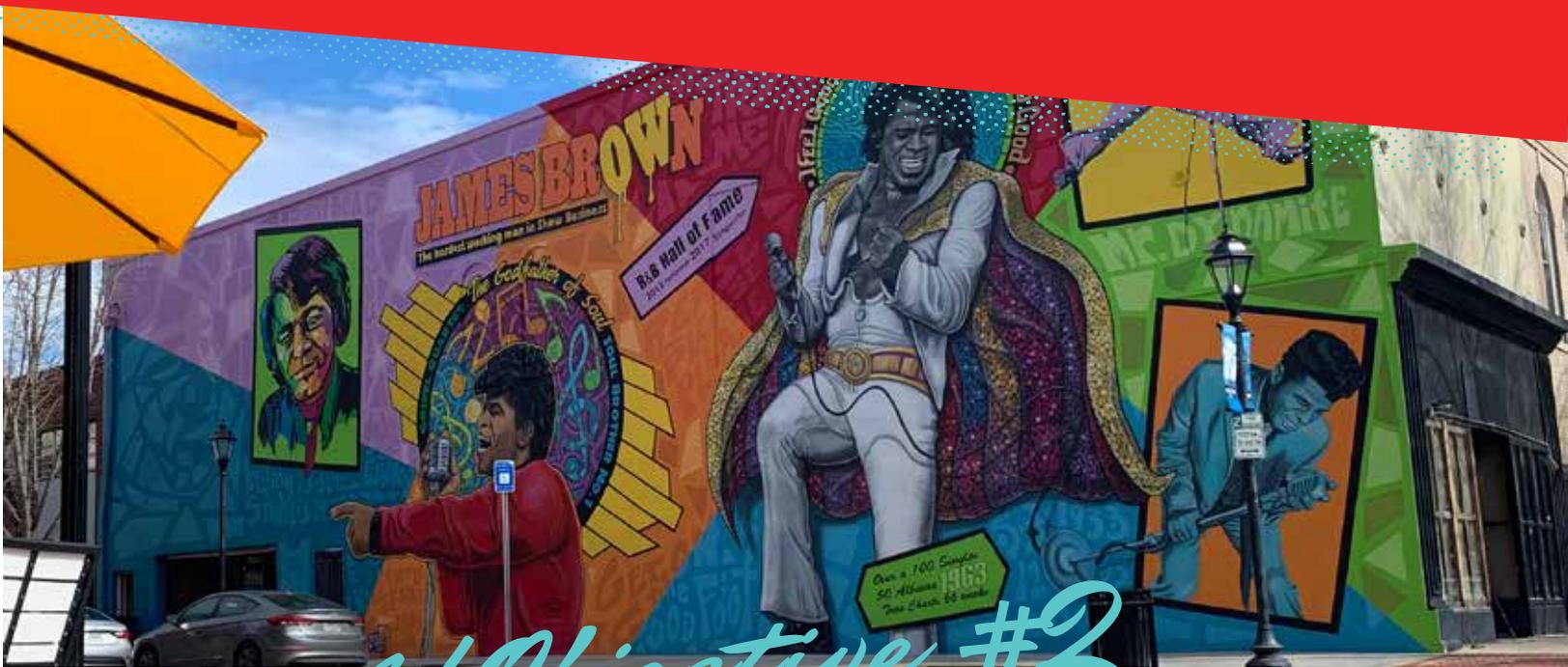
Goal/Objective #2

★ **KEEP AUGUSTA IMPROVING TO BE THE MOST ATTRACTIVE TRAVEL DESTINATION IT CAN BE**

Augusta has some amazing assets that enhance the quality of life for locals and provide incentive for people to visit. Yet, there is room for next level growth and physical improvement. **DESTINATION BLUEPRINT** serves as a valuable tool in helping to shape a vision for future development and identifying opportunities to distinguish and elevate Augusta within the visitor industry.

Extensive research was conducted as part of the **DESTINATION BLUEPRINT** development process.

Destination Blueprint focuses on formulating and recommending destination development strategies that can help to gain market share in the tourism sector, increase overnight stays and drive exposure to new leisure and group markets. This is also an opportunity to engage investors of the **ALL IN AUGUSTA CAMPAIGN** to help meet some of the priorities that are aligned between All In Augusta and Destination Blueprint.

Key Results

ESTABLISH AWARENESS OF AUGUSTA'S UNIQUE DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS AND EXPERIENCES THAT VISITORS AND LOCALS CAN HAVE IN THE CITY'S CORE

Initiatives

» Enhance downtown website presence organizing by districts to educate visitors and locals on what to do and see

» Social media promotion of downtown districts utilizing district location tags, highlights, and hashtags

» Expand downtown district content in Augusta's Experience Guide

Key Results

CREATE A DESCRIPTIVE FORMAT BRANDED AS "AUTHENTIC AUGUSTA EXPERIENCES" TO DRIVE EXPOSURE TO GROUPS AND LEISURE MARKETS

Initiatives

» Create or present experiences in a descriptive format including photos, pricing, group minimums and other details to market online, in collateral materials, and to groups.

» Market these Authentic Augusta Experiences:

  » Build a web presence for these experiences

  » Custom landing pages for groups

  » Target digital advertising of these experiences to group attendees

» Use the group experiences as an edge in marketing to meeting and event planners and incorporate a selection of the experiences into the agenda of the meeting in preplanning – use Authentic Augusta Experiences collateral in tradeshow, and all sales processes

» Administer the tourism product development grant as a funding source to increase quality destination products and aid in the development of immersive experiences

Key Results

ENHANCE THE IMAGE OF AUGUSTA AND NAVIGATION FOR THE VISITOR

Initiatives

» Update Augusta Wayfinding Signage System

Key Results

CREATE UNIQUE EXPERIENCES IN AUGUSTA & CO. TO INCREASE USAGE BY LOCALS AND VISITORS AS THE FIRST STOP TO UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES IN AUGUSTA

Initiatives

» Use pop up shops and community takeovers to create local experiences

» Identify new vendors with authentic products reflecting the diversity of our community and talents

» Use seasonal events to draw in customers with special promotions

» Use bios of vendors to showcase authenticity and uniqueness in social media content

» Use rotating vignettes to tell themed stories of experiences in Augusta

Goal/Objective #3

★ FOSTER STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT AND COLLABORATION

We believe that the public, private and civic sectors must align and collaborate across a wide spectrum of initiatives to elevate quality of place for visitors and quality of life for locals.

Augusta, like most destinations, is made up of interconnected networks and complex systems. How well government, community and industry leaders work together influences how well visitors will experience Augusta's River Region. Strong visible alliances impact where visitors travel in the region and for how long, when they go and why, how much they spend, what types of businesses they support, and what they share on social media, etc. It impacts why they even show up in the first place.

These partnerships will also allow us to continue elevating equity, diversity and inclusion through conversations and actionable initiatives to impact real-world change in our community and within our own organization.

Key Results

MORE APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF TOURISM'S VALUE TO OUR COMMUNITY AND THE ROLE OF DESTINATION AUGUSTA IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Initiatives

Community Engagement Action Plan (to include Board and Staff participation)

- » Government – Engaging local leaders and state leaders with one on ones and presentations
- » Partners – Hosting Familiarization Tours, Masters of Hospitality, and sharing information
- » Community – Speaking Engagements at Civic Clubs, AU, Paine, and Corporate locations
- » Local Media – Actively pitching tourism and economic development story angles
- » Industry Associations and Professionals – Sharing Destination Augusta news, awards, announcements, and victories

Key Results

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF STAKEHOLDERS AND TOURISM PARTNERS ENGAGED AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING AS A COLLABORATIVE INDUSTRY

Initiatives

» Develop collaboration/partnership vetting process to ensure mission alignment

» Increase awareness of the Partner Extranet and benefits. Provide training materials and quarterly virtual training opportunities

» Ensure Come See Augusta campaign backyard advocates are engaged and actively participating in the campaign on an ongoing basis

» Collaborate with Economic Development partners to develop a Relocation and Recruitment Partner Toolkit

» Develop and launch comprehensive Destination Augusta marketing opportunities planner for tourism partners

» Use regularly scheduled meetings and digital information sharing to keep key partners informed, such as hotel owners/general managers and attractions directors

» Partner with the Augusta Sports Council to identify and jointly recruit major sporting groups and events.

Goal/Objective #4

★ ARTICULATE AND EMOTIONALIZE AUGUSTA'S UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

Our focus will be to enhance the way we tell real stories about this soulful, charming and culturally-rich destination and inspire individuals and groups to visit who feel a kinship to the stories. With the right connection, they'll respond quickly as they come from near and far.

For the benefit of locals and visitors, our branding will continue to clarify what separates us from other choices and experiences people have in a destination and will speak loudly about what we can authentically promise and deliver to visitors. Plus, our community and our team will continue to benefit from having an exciting and defining identity and campaign to rally behind.

Key Results

PROVIDE INSPIRING AND USEFUL COLLATERAL FOR VISITORS AND MEETING PLANNERS TO INFLUENCE THEIR DECISION TO TRAVEL HERE

Initiatives

» Develop and distribute Augusta's Experience Guide prioritizing the digital experience

» Produce supplemental specialty collateral for those interested in digging deeper on particular areas of interests

Key Results

SHOW THE IMPACT OF CREATIVE STORYTELLING ON GROWING LEISURE DRIVE MARKET INTEREST AND VISITATION

Initiatives

» Execute integrated leisure marketing campaigns to grow awareness of Augusta among prospective drive market visitors, effectively increasing interest in and foot traffic for Augusta as a top Georgia tourism destination

Key Results

ENCOURAGE TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS TO EMBRACE OUR CITY'S BRAND PERSONALITY AND USE IT CONSISTENTLY

Initiatives

» Utilize the Come See Augusta campaign to engage partners and stakeholders in telling Augusta's story alongside us and bring it to life

Key Results

ENHANCE LOCAL AWARENESS AND EXCITEMENT ABOUT OUR CITY'S BRAND PERSONALITY SO LOCALS WILL SHARE IT WITH OTHERS

Initiatives

» Execute a local advertising campaign to increase awareness of Augusta's authentic offerings amongst locals in Augusta's River Region

Key Results

RADICALLY CHANGE THE ARRIVAL EXPERIENCE AT AUGUSTA REGIONAL AIRPORT BY INCORPORATING AUGUSTA'S BRAND AND CREATING AN EXTENSION OF THE AUGUSTA & CO. EXPERIENCE ONSITE

Initiatives

» Partner with the airport to incorporate Augusta's brand into the common areas such as the jetwalk, terminals and guest areas

» Create photo opportunities and information sharing area accessible to all airport guests

» Explore extending the Augusta & Co. experience to the airport to include an Augusta Expert staffed Augusta & Co. experience center

Key Results

ELEVATE AWARENESS OF GOLF CART TRANSPORTATION IN DOWNTOWN, REMINDING EVERYONE OF AUGUSTA'S GLOBALLY-LEADING POSITION IN GOLF CART PRODUCTION

Initiatives

» Brand Destination Augusta's Golf Cart with funky messaging and call to action to learn more about golf cart transportation

» Build a landing page to spread the word about golf cart transportation and options in downtown Augusta

Goal/Objective #5

★ ENHANCE DESTINATION AUGUSTA'S PUBLIC PROFILE

Destination Augusta, the city's destination marketing and destination management organization, desires to be recognized and respected as an agile, high-performing, impactful organization, and one of the best places to work in Augusta's River Region. This entails remaining stable, relevant, and resilient in the face of up and down cycles of budget challenges and an increasingly changing landscape as we face issues out of our control. It also means combining service with advocacy to deliver results to our community and stakeholders.

To truly succeed, we need to remain financially stable, with a passionate, professional, skilled team, and committed strong leadership both within our team and within our volunteer Board of Directors.

We strive for a mission-oriented organizational culture, where our team members have a clear sense of purpose. They understand how their roles contribute to the bigger picture and to the immediate and long-term goals to accomplish the work that benefits the Augusta community.

Key Results

RECOGNITION OF DESTINATION AUGUSTA'S VALUE AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Initiatives

- » Fully engage Board of Directors who commit to our vision and mission and are our most impactful and most influential advocates
- » Strengthen ties with lawmakers at all levels – local, state and federal - by being a source of ideas and information in the tourism industry space
- » Consistently highlight the benefits and value of being an accredited Destination Marketing Organization through Destination International's destination marketing accreditation program

Key Results

GROW DESTINATION AUGUSTA'S COMMITMENT TO BEING AN IMPACTFUL AND HIGH-PERFORMING ORGANIZATION

Initiatives

- » Invest in organizational and individual development programs
- » Provide both professional and internally-led training in topics such as emotional intelligence, stress management, wellness, etc.
- » Facilitate an environment that builds a positive culture and prioritizes team morale and camaraderie
- » Continue to refine our culture and reassess our organizational values
- » Investigate and establish ways to maximize the impact of our benefits programs

- » Begin a community-driven process for the next strategic plan using input from the city strategic plan and local stakeholders
- » Evaluate administrative processes to maximize time spent on impactful programs
- » Affirm and use filter tests to assess opportunities and maintain mission-focus
- » Develop long-term savings, capital, and debt management plans to increase the organization's resilience in uncertain economic times
- » Continue to optimize and refine team performance management processes for simplicity and ease of use
- » Establish a comprehensive compensation plan and incentive plan to maximize growth, impact and potential
- » Leverage funds in the All In Campaign to champion implementable and effective projects that further the mission of the organization. Increase communication with stakeholders and investors to grow engagement, enthusiasm and momentum

Key Results

CHAMPION DESTINATION AUGUSTA AS A LEADER IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AND LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Initiatives

- » Share information, research and results to establish our community relevance and protect our funding sources
- » Connect the data to our community's story

Key Results

BE A COMMUNITY EXAMPLE OF A LOCAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Initiatives

- » Present an introduction to the importance and development of DEI initiatives in our community
- » Develop team-level best practices to incorporate DEI opportunities
- » Develop initiatives to improve diversity, equity, and inclusivity across the local travel industry
- » Assess opportunities for DEI collaboration amongst non-traditional stakeholders

Destination Augusta
Team

» **Bennish Brown**
  President/CEO

» **Trent Snyder**
  Vice President of Finance &
  Administration

» **Brenda Atkins**
  Office Operations Manager

» **Jennifer Bowen**
  Vice President of Destination
  Development and Community
  Engagement & Film Liaison

» **Sarah Childers**
  Director of Community Engagement

» **Lindsay Fructl**
  Vice President of Marketing &
  Communications

» **Natasha Carter**
  Marketing Manager

» **Rachel Wilkerson**
  Communications Manager

» **Michelle Bovian**
  Director of Group Business
  Development

» **Iman Johnson**
  Senior Manager of Group Business
  Development

» **Taylor Wood**
  Manager of Group Business
  Development

» **Fionna Chew**
  Augusta & Co. Customer Experience
  Supervisor

» **Keallie McCarley**
  Augusta & Co. Augusta Expert

» **Meagan Jones**
  Augusta & Co. Augusta Expert

DESTINATION AUGUSTA