



CITY OF Savannah

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Monthly Newsletter, March 2017

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Local Business Spotlight: Freedom Trail Tours



(Johnnie Brown awarded 2015 Micro-Entrepreneur of the Year)

Johnnie Brown is the owner and operator of Freedom Trail Tours. With over twenty years of experience, Mr. Brown’s tour service has been featured in *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and even highlighted on Bravo’s *Real Housewives of Atlanta*. Under the mentorship of Savannah civil rights leader, W.W. Law, Mr. Brown launched Freedom Trail Tours in 2001, and has become one of the area’s leading historic tour services.

Mr. Brown invites visitors and locals to learn about Savannah’s black heritage by exploring sites including the First African Baptist Church, the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum, the Beach Institute, slave burial grounds, and remnants of the Underground Railroad. Tours are available daily and depart from the Savannah Visitor Information Center at 301 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

In 2015, Mr. Brown was honored “Micro-Entrepreneur of the Year” by the [Small Business Assistance Corporation](#) (SBAC). Through the SBAC, Mr. Brown has received several loans to finance various projects, and to purchase a new bus, to grow Freedom Trail Tours. In 2011, Mr. Brown received the [City of Savannah’s Housing and Urban Development Special Purpose Grant](#) to refinance his tour bus. Grateful for the support of the SBAC and the City of Savannah, Mr. Brown encourages future entrepreneurs and local businesses “never to give up” on their goals and to “make it happen.”

For more information or to book a tour, call Johnnie Brown at (912) 398-2785.

Business News



[St. Patrick’s Day Helps Business](#)

Big crowds always mean big business for Savannah. Around half-a-million people were estimated to visit for the holiday weekend. WSAV reports that a majority of businesses they interviewed had improved sales from years past and hope for a repeat next year. The colder weather did not deter thousands from enjoying the weekend and patronizing local establishments.



[Housing & Community Development](#)

The City of Savannah’s Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan addresses the City’s housing, homelessness, and non-housing community development needs for the five-year period 2018-2022. Your input on the [Community Needs Survey](#) will provide an understanding of the City’s needs and priorities for community development activities.



[Joseph Marinelli Honored](#)

Visit Savannah President Joseph Marinelli was presented with the John P. Rousakis Community Champion Award by the Tourism Leadership Council on March 9, 2017. Marinelli was selected “for his efforts to market the city of Savannah as a tourism destination and for his active involvement in the community through his positions on many boards and committees citywide.”

Small Business Assistance Corporation



The [Small Business Assistance Corporation](#) (SBAC) is a regional agency that connects entrepreneurs and businesses to various sources of financing and technical assistance. Serving Savannah and the Low Country, the SBAC manages thirteen different [loan programs](#) sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration, State of Georgia, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the City of Savannah. The SBAC offers microloans up to \$50,000, and real estate loans up to \$5.5 million.

The Small Business Assistance Corporation has been in full operation since September, 1989, and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors that reflects the makeup and business development interests of its market area. Through its efforts, the SBAC strives for socioeconomic improvement for all citizens by creating opportunities for small business growth and activity.

Visit the SBAC at the Small Business Resource Center at
111 E. Liberty Street in Savannah.

Upcoming Events

[Upcoming Business Courses and Workshops](#)

Savannah Entrepreneurial Center

[1 Million Cups: Entrepreneur Presentations](#)

Every Wednesday, 9:00am
Creator's Foundry, 415 W. Boundary St.

[SCORE Franchise Investment Workshop](#)

March 22, 2017, 11:30am-1pm
SCORE, 111 E. Liberty St.

[18th Annual Tubby's Business Connection](#)

March 23, 2017, 5:30-7:30pm
Tubby's Tank House

[Downtown Streetscapes Presentation](#)

March 23, 6:00-8:00pm
Coastal Georgia Center

[Small Business Chamber Networking Breakfast](#)

April 11, 2017, 7:45am-9:15am
Coastal Georgia Center

Featured Resource: Small Business Resource Center



The Small Business Resource Center (SBRC) is a one-stop-center for local and regional business services. The SBRC is home to the following offices:

- [SCORE](#): SCORE is a national non-profit organization which, in cooperation with SBA, counsels small business owners on the basics of setting up and running a small business.
- [Small Business Assistance Corporation \(SBAC\)](#): Serving 53 counties in coastal Georgia and South Carolina, SBAC offers business financing and technical assistance.
- [U. S. Commercial Service Dept. of Commerce](#): The U.S. Commercial Service helps U.S. companies find new international business partners in worldwide markets.

Small Business Resource Center

[111 E. Liberty Street, Savannah, GA 31404](#)

City of Savannah

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"To facilitate economic development activities that foster a strong local economy, spur business and job growth, and provide for a better quality of life in Savannah."