

Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting

April 19, 2016

TAC Agenda

- Chair's Report
- Tourism management plan
- Revisions to the Tour Service for Hire Ordinance
- Savannah Serves: Ambassador Program
- Preservation Fee report
- Enforcement report
- Pedestrian Wayfinding & Directional Signage
- Other business



**Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)
Meeting Summary
April 19, 2016**

TAC Attendees: Charlie Brazil, David Jones, Bill Lovett, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Eric Meyerhoff, Michael Owens, Joe Marinelli, Sandra Baxter, Jamie Caskey, DeAnne Mitchell, Austin Hill

Guests: Tobias McGrath, Robert Edgerly, Bob Hunt, Hannah Gallagher, Mickey Minick, Phil Sellers, Karen Brown, Daniel Carey, Carol Buttiermer, Marsha Haines

Chair's Report

Chair Goode-Walker mentioned an Irish reporter did a fantastic job on an article about Savannah's St. Patrick's Day festivities. She asked for an update on the St. Patrick's Day Festival. Mr. Marinelli stated it is a festival representing the tale of two cities—a family parade in the morning and then a much different environment in the afternoon and evening hours. He added he attended the Orange Crush Festival at Tybee Island. His observations were that the City of Tybee and the police had a plan, and they were following it.

Chair Goode-Walker mentioned that Elizabeth Becker, author of *Overbooked*, visited Savannah in February and had the opportunity to meet with the TAC. Her discussion will assist as we launch the Tourism Management Plan. Chair Goode-Walker added the TAC is not required to meet every month.

Tourism Management Plan

Ms. Lidy discussed the development of a Tourism Management Plan. The purpose of the initiative is to balance resident needs with industry interests, while also maintaining Savannah's prominence as a global visitor destination. Approximately \$20,000 was allocated in the Tourism Management and Ambassadorship Department's budget will be used to hire a consultant or group of consultants to facilitate the process. Previous work will be used to support efforts including the National Trust for Historic Preservation's *Living with Success Revisited: Summit on Heritage Tourism in our Nation's Most Beloved Historic Cities* report, the two surveys done by USC-Beaufort of tourism professionals and residents and other reports. Proposals have been submitted to Historic Savannah Foundation, Visit Savannah, Tourism Leadership Council and Downtown Neighborhood Association to secure their participation in the process. To date, the Downtown Neighborhood Association and Visit Savannah have committed \$5,000 each. A proposal was also submitted to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Johanna Favrot Fund in the amount of \$10,000. The goal is to develop a scope of work during the month of May with the TAC serving as the advisory group for the process.

Mr. Owens said the plan is long overdue and added the City should be committing additional funding for it. With \$300,000+ spent on a cruise ship study and other resources for a baseball stadium, it seems as though more would be committed for such an important initiative and investment into the community's future. Mr. Meyerhoff stated the City should not hire another consultant; all we seem to do is hire consultants to study things. Mr. Jones added consultants will provide organization, expertise and time to do the plan.

Preservation Fee Report

Ms. Lidy reviewed the 2015 preservation fees collections which totaled \$745,222. This is a breakdown of the projects funded.

PROJECTS	2015	2016
Factors Walk Wall Stabilization	\$ --	\$117,500
Factor Walk Lighting Improvements	\$ --	\$25,000
Atlantic Mall Lighting	\$ 35,000	\$ --
Fountain Conservation	\$ 51,250	\$20,000
Monument Conservation	\$ 50,000	\$50,000
Park, Square, Median and Irrigation Improvement	\$ 51,250	\$50,000
Rousakis Plaza and Riverfront Repair	\$ 25,000	\$50,000
Square Renovation	\$ 60,000	\$60,000
Montgomery Street Ramp	\$102,500	\$102,500
River Street Ramp Reconstruction	\$125,000	\$125,000
Louisville Road Retaining Wall	\$101,000	\$ --
TOTAL	\$701,000	\$600,000

Funds not allocated are kept in a reserve fund to address preservation-related emergencies.

Savannah Serves: Ambassador Program

Mrs. Lidy explained the City launched the Savannah Serves Pilot Program comprised of ambassadors. The initial 12-week initiative represents a strong partnership with the tourism industry to provide the highest level of public safety and enhanced services for downtown users. Ambassador programs are used in municipalities throughout the world to provide valuable services to visitors, citizens and businesses. The Savannah Serves Pilot Program promotes and supports crime prevention, public safety and security; provides information and hospitality services; and promotes a high-quality environment by identifying and reporting maintenance problems and needs. These activities supplement—and do not replace existing City services. Mr. Owens added the ambassadors are getting things done. They are reporting graffiti to the City so it will get removed. These individuals are also put through an intensive, two-day training program focusing on supporting crime prevention, public safety and security; providing information and hospitality services; and promoting a high-quality environment by identifying and reporting maintenance problems and needs. Training is provided by SCMPD. They were also outfitted in highly-visible uniforms. The attached report was shared with the TAC.

Mrs. Baxter suggested the staff at the Tri-Centennial Park to include CHS and Visit Savannah also participate in the public safety training.

Revisions to the Tour Service for Hire Ordinance

Mrs. Lidy reported staff is in the process of revising the quadricycle ordinance. The horse drawn carriage ordinance is also being revised to reflect the revisions made to the Tour Service for Hire Ordinance as well as other areas. Mr. Lovett asked for any documents to be sent to the TAC prior to the meeting to allow for time to review the information.

Pedestrian Wayfinding and Directional Signage Program

Mrs. Lidy set up a video for the TAC to watch pertaining to the Pedestrian Wayfinding and Directional Signage Program. A link to the video can be found at this link (8 minutes/40 seconds):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uapeEnPbmYU>

Mr. Owens added the tourism industry identified this as an issue more than 10 years ago. The Savannah Area Mobility Management, Inc. (SAMMI) was established to plan for the wayfinding program as well as other mobility improvements outlined in the Visitor Mobility Plan. Originally, 13 hotels were supporting the program, now there are 31 hotels.

Other Business

Chair Goode-Walker added Council is reviewing applicants who applied for the At-Large position. She added a Council person will be represented on TAC. She added the next TAC meeting has tentatively been scheduled for May 17, 8:30AM—*date changed to May 24.*



Mr. Brazil asked about the hotel developments on the west end of River Street. Staff reported the projects were moving forward. Information on the redevelopment of this area will be communicated with tour companies as closures are announced. The City is actively working with both developers to ensure this gateway is improved.

Mr. Marinelli added that it was great to see the table and chairs full with TAC members. He has seen the advancement of many initiatives—Savannah Serves, Enforcement report, wayfinding and directional signage and NTHP summit. The summit was held in Savannah two years ago as part of their annual conference. The summit represented a panel including representatives from Charleston, New Orleans, San Antonio and Savannah. Our community was in a much better position than these cities. It is good to see collaborations like this to develop solutions.

P.O. BOX 1027, SAVANNAH, GA 31402

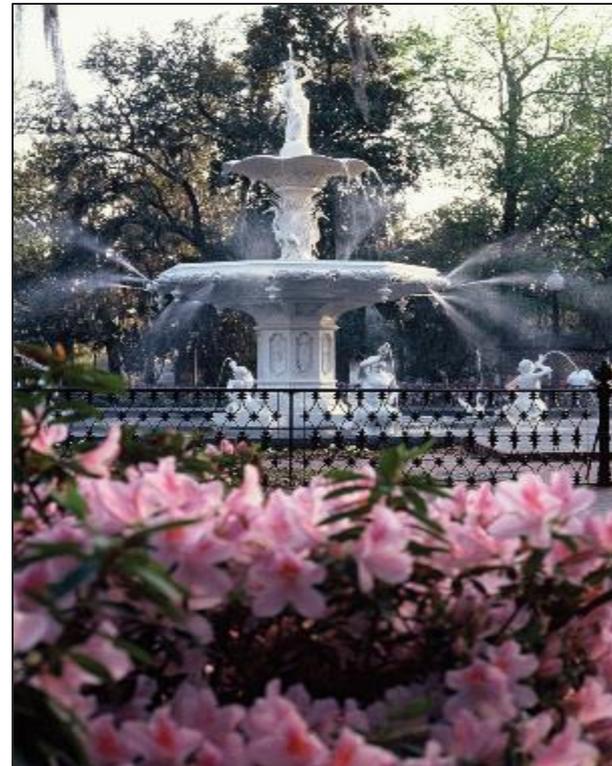
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Tourism Advisory Committee

*“...MAKE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
TOURISM MANAGEMENT & AMBASSADORSHIP
DEPARTMENT,
CITY MANAGER AND MAYOR AND ALDERMEN IN THE
AREAS OF PARKING AND THE ROUTINE OF TOURISM-
RELATED TRAFFIC ACTIVITIES, THE QUALIFICATION AND
LICENSING OF TOUR GUIDES, AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF
TOURISM MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS AND OTHER
RELATED ISSUES.”*

Tourism Management Plan

- Goal: to balance resident needs with industry interests, while also maintaining Savannah's prominence as a global visitor destination



Builds on...

- National Trust for Historic Preservation's *Living with Success Revisited: Summit on Heritage Tourism in our Nation's Most Beloved Historic Cities* report
- Other tourism management plans (Charleston, SC; Williamsburg, VA; Santa Fe, NM)
- Results from the recent resident and tourism surveys, conducted by the University of South Carolina-Lowcountry and Resort Islands Tourism Institute

FUNDING FOR TOURISM MANAGEMENT PLAN

City of Savannah	\$ 20,000
Visit Savannah	\$ 5,000
Historic Savannah Foundation ^	\$ 5,000
Tourism Leadership Council ^	\$ 1,500
Downtown Neighborhood Association	\$ 5,000
National Trust for Historic Preservation ^	\$ 10,000
TOTAL	\$ 46,500

^ Requests for funding submitted

Preservation Fee Update

In 2015, preservation fees collections totaled \$745,222

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Factors Walk Wall Stabilization	\$ --	\$117,500
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Web references

- Ambassador Report:
<http://www.savannahga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8343>
- 2015 & 2016 Enforcement Reports:
<http://www.savannahga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7386>
<http://www.savannahga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8403>
- Wayfinding & Directional Signage Program:
<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/> (8:04)



**12-WEEK PILOT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM UPDATE
NOVEMBER 1, 2015 – JANUARY 17, 2016**

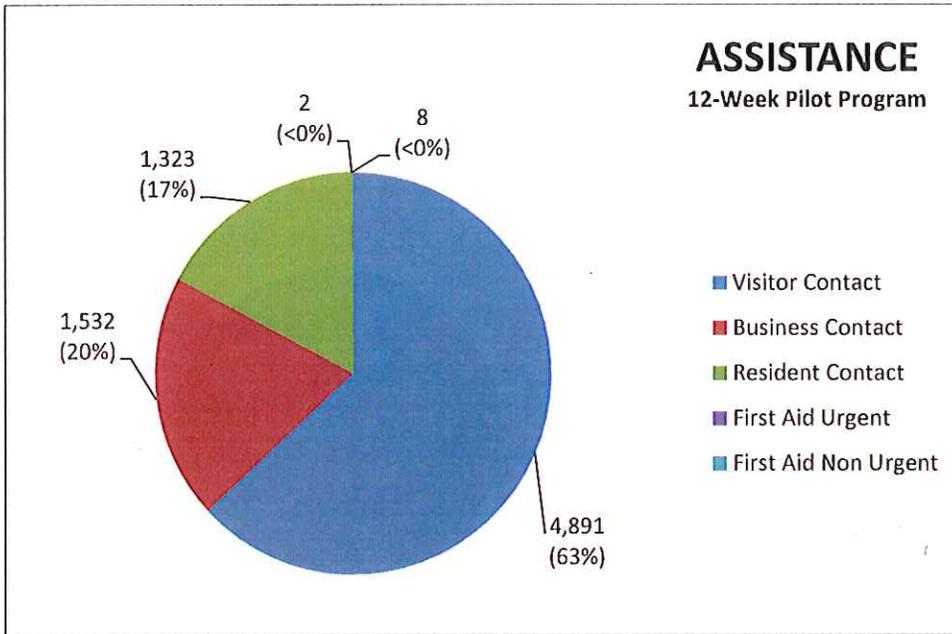
The City of Savannah launched the ambassador component of the Savannah Serves Pilot Program to provide the highest level of public safety and enhanced services for downtown users. This 12-week initiative represents a strong partnership with the tourism industry and business community.

Ambassador programs are used in municipalities throughout the world to provide valuable services to visitors, citizens and businesses. The Savannah Serves Pilot Program promotes and supports crime prevention, public safety and security; provides information and hospitality services; and promotes a high-quality environment by identifying and reporting maintenance problems and needs. These activities supplement existing City services.

During the pilot program, 12 candidates were hired to serve as ambassadors. They were selected because they possessed the characteristics needed to support the initiative and were successful in the pre-screening employment process. They also took part two-days of intensive training.

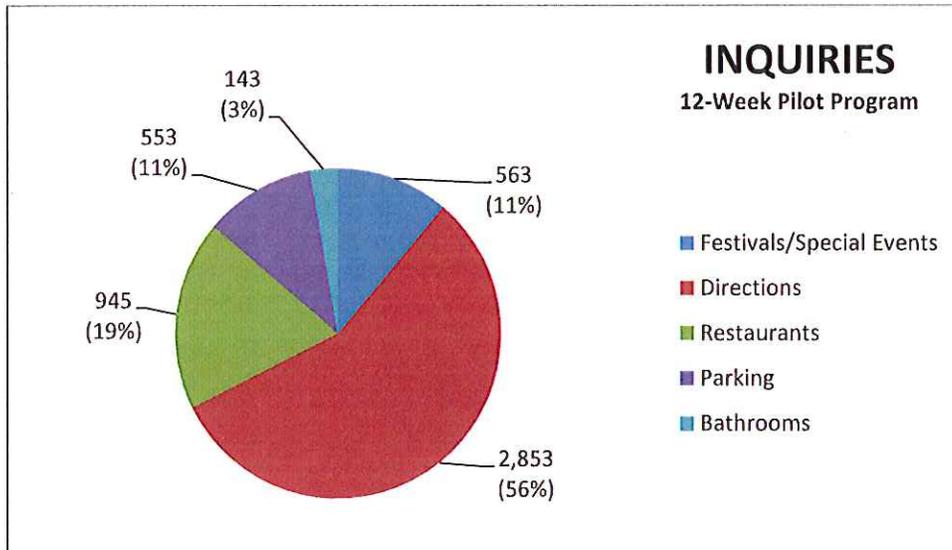
The ambassadors worked 40-hour a week. Their schedule ran from Wednesday to Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Sundays, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. They are outfitted in highly-visible uniforms.





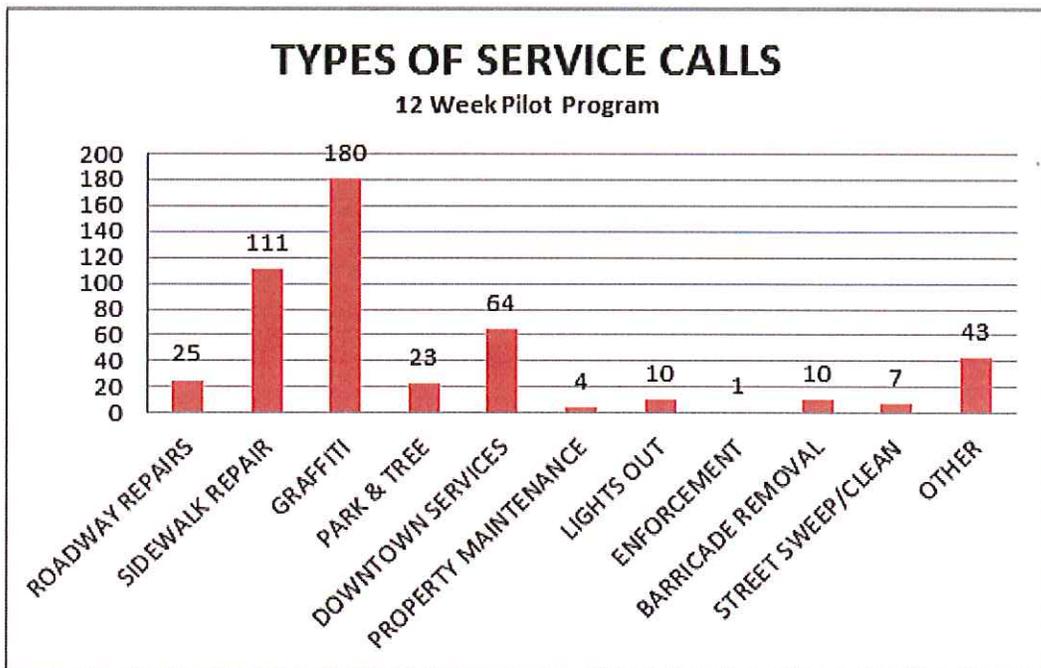
INQUIRIES

During the 12-week pilot program, the ambassadors received a total of 5,057 inquiries. The following demonstrates the types of inquiries made.



CALLS FOR SERVICE

The ambassadors reported 478 calls for service to the City’s 311 Call Center in the area north of Liberty Street. At the time of this report, 63% of these requests have been completed or are scheduled for service while 28% were new service requests recently reported to the 311 Call Center. Based on the table, the common form of service call was graffiti or sidewalk repair.



“Other” refers to water leaks, a broken news box, blocked catch basins, water pooling, recycle cart courtesy pickups, raising/lowering water meters, damaged signs, contract repairs, traffic pole damages and signal outages, electrical outlet damages, abandoned bikes, power outages, bench damages, a damaged manhole, utility service requests, tours larger than 30, building maintenance requests, and trash and recycling relocation request, leaking pipes, abandoned bikes, parking meter malfunction.

IMMEDIATELY ADDRESSING ISSUES

Ambassadors noted several issues in their daily activity reports including multiple complaints about the homeless, illegal activities occurring in lanes, skateboarding in restricted areas, horse spills, and unlicensed street performers/vendors. These items were reported to SCMPD Tourism Oriented Policing (TOP) or the appropriate City department for resolution.

The ambassadors also assisted with several issues in the field:

- After the Veteran’s Parade, an ambassador assisted SCMPD with a fight involving juveniles. The ambassador was able to direct SCMPD to the juveniles involved with fighting and provided information concerning the altercation.
- Two storefronts on Broughton Street were unlocked. An ambassador notified the supervisor of the buildings to report the issue and make sure the doors were secure.
- An ambassador assisted staff from a Broughton Street store by escorting an unruly individual from the premises.
- An ambassador noted a single vehicle incident in the lane where public property was damaged. After further investigation by SCMPD along with the ambassador, it was determined the driver involved was drunk.
- An ambassaor escorted a group of seven foreign visitors from Japan to the River Street Elevator.

- Ambassadors assisted an individual with a dead car battery as well as a visitor who ran out of gas.
- After tripping over a hose at a gas station, an ambassaor helped an injured man with scraped knees by escorting him to CVS for large bandags and waved a pedicab to take him to a local restaurant where he was meeting his party.
- An ambassador supported EMS and SCMPD by aproaching a car that was pulled over on Bay Street. The man in the passenger seat said that he felt that he was having a heart attack. The ambassador stayed with the driver of the car until EMS left, the driver followed SCMPD to Memorial Hospital.
- Two unsupervised children under the age of five were in a fountain in Johnson Square collecting money. Ambassadors were able to dry the children and contact the SCMPD to return them to their parents.
- An ambassador contacted the SCMPD when they witnessed a person accosting a visitor. The individual was arrested, and the ambassador is listed as a witness if the case goes to court.
- An ambassador found a black zip up pouch in Washington Square. The lost pouch was turned into SCMPD Headquarters.
- An intoxicated older Caucasian male was dancing around the band while they were setting up music equipment and was disturbing people enjoying themselves in City Market. Ambassadors contacted SCMPD and they responded.
- A homeless woman was disturbing a Broughton Street store and would not leave after several requests. Ambassadors called the non-emergency police number. SCMPD officers responded promptly.
- A camera was found on a bench near City Hall. The camera was turned in to SCMPD Headquarters.

COMMENTS ABOUT THE SAVANNAH SERVES PILOT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

"It's great to see smiling faces who are constant in our neighborhood to help our visitors find where there going and make them feel comfortable. From a retailer's perspective, it's nice to see them walking around town and engaging others. I have really enjoyed my direct interaction with the Ambassadors. They have always been pleasant and helpful to me."

--Lowell Kronowitz, President, Levy Jewelers

"I certainly support the Ambassador program. Similar programs have been very successful in other cities and it will benefit Savannah as well, in particular in relation to preventing crime. Not only that, we are a hospitality city – every smiling face helps us and our businesses"

--Ansley Williams, Owner, Live Oak Restaurants

"It's refreshing to see a professional and organized approach by the community to address our growing tourism industry. We appreciate that this program assists both visitors and residents alike and that everyone in the area benefits. We look forward to the program's continuation and expansion"

--Melinda Allen, President, Downtown Neighborhood Association

"The Ambassador program is a game changing forward thinking program and that Savannah it already seeing the positive results. The implementation of this program it is a force multiplier for those who serve and protect not only our citizens but our visitors as well. "

--Ruel Joyner, President, Savannah Downtown Business Association

"It's such a pleasure to see the Ambassadors out there. They are such a positive presence on River Street. They are engaging and professional. I haven't heard a single negative thing about the program from any of our River Street Businesses and members. I would love to see more ambassadors on patrol and the rest of the program implemented as soon as possible. I can't wait to see the positive impact of the full program."

--Carrie Bligh, Executive Director, Savannah Waterfront Association

"I have been seeing them (ambassadors) around. They are all friendly and pleasant! Well done!"

--T. Gongaware, Resident

"I would be the first to question the decision to have ambassadors, however I have to tell you they are doing a great job. No doubt we need more than the ambassadors to fix the obvious homeless and crime issues, but your program is outstanding. We have three downtown stores with a 4th about to open. Thank you."

--Paul Allen, Woof Gang Bakery

"Last Friday, December 4th, was open house on Wright Square. Your two ambassadors, Carroll and Blaze, were also there. They were both very helpful ...at Ascension Lutheran Church... in getting all the last minute arrangements completed. I also noticed them doing the same thing at other sites around the square. These two ladies are to commended on the outstanding job they performed in and around the square. I was not aware of the program, but hope that the City will continue to provide ambassadors like Carroll and Blaze throughout the city. Thank you." --Joe Tillman, Custom Technical Solution, Inc.

"Thank you so much for getting that bike removed. We have tried forever to get it removed."

--Dave at Chive, 4 W. Broughton Street.