

SMART  
BUSINESSES  
COME ON OVER.



*Mount Pleasant,  
South Carolina*

TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
2013-2017

# Table of Contents

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
II.	OPPORTUNITY .....	2
III.	PROFILE.....	2
IV.	EXISTING STRATEGY .....	3
V.	CHALLENGE.....	4
VI.	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEFINITION.....	5
VII.	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MISSION .....	5
VIII.	GOALS.....	6
IX.	OBJECTIVES.....	7
	a. GOAL #1.....	7
	b. GOAL #2.....	9
	c. GOAL #3.....	10
	d. GOAL #4.....	11
	e. GOAL #5.....	12
	f. GOAL #6.....	13
	g. GOAL #7.....	14
X.	TIMELINE.....	15

APPENDIX A – 2009 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

APPENDIX B – 2011 BIZ INC POLICY

APPENDIX C – 2009 TOURISM ACTION PLAN

# Town of Mount Pleasant Economic Development Strategy

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

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Crafting an economic development strategy for a town as unique as Mount Pleasant required looking beyond the traditional practices of economic development to understand what makes Mount Pleasant desirable. The customary economic development model focuses on recruiting industry that derives a significant portion of revenue from outside the region. This model has provided some success for the town, but revenue generation should not be the sole focus. Instead, the emphasis will be to provide an environment that advances the residents' quality of life, while fulfilling their needs and aspirations, in turn creating self-perpetuating investments within the community.

Edward T. McMahon of the Urban Land Institute authored, *The Distinctive City*, an article referencing the importance of attracting human capital. A study by the Knight Foundation in 2010 found that a community's appeal drives economic prosperity allowing an emotional bond to form between people and their community. Communities with the highest level of attachment also had the highest rates of gross domestic product growth and the strongest economies. Investing in streetscapes, promoting our natural resources and supporting cultural events, tourism and parks will foster a sense of place, creating community differentiation and a competitive advantage.

The town's comprehensive economic development strategy entails traditional methods. Efforts will be aligned with regional partners to recruit compatible industries all while supporting existing industry. Measures will be in place to evaluate performance and successes will be marketed. However, the most essential component of the strategy will be escalating efforts to improve and attract human capital and building an even better quality of life.

## **OPPORTUNITY:**

The town of Mount Pleasant stands at the threshold of a new economic era, facing opportunity and challenge in equal measure. Limited land options, high prices and cumbersome regulations limited growth at one time. Yet recent amendments to regulations and a significant investment in a viable transportation network have invigorated redevelopment within the community. Given these new times, the Town has chosen to collaborate with its business and stakeholder community in the creation of a new Economic Development Strategy. This five year strategy (2013-2017) will enable the Town to expand its economic development agenda to respond to the demands of the globally competitive knowledge-based economy. As a result, the Town will assume a more regional and global perspective for measuring success, and enhance its value proposition for the attraction of business, employment and investment in the Town. The focus will be to enhance the business friendly environment, with available and trainable workforce all in a setting noted for a high quality of life. Payroll dollars from outside the community will be first priority.

## **PROFILE:**

Based on data provided by the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce and the 2010 census, 60% of our businesses fall within these top five categories:

.....

***Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (16%)***

***Retail Trade (15%)***

***Health Care and Social Assistance (13%)***

***Accommodation and Food Services (8%)***

***Construction (8%)***

.....

### **TOP NON-GOVERNMENT MAJOR EMPLOYERS**

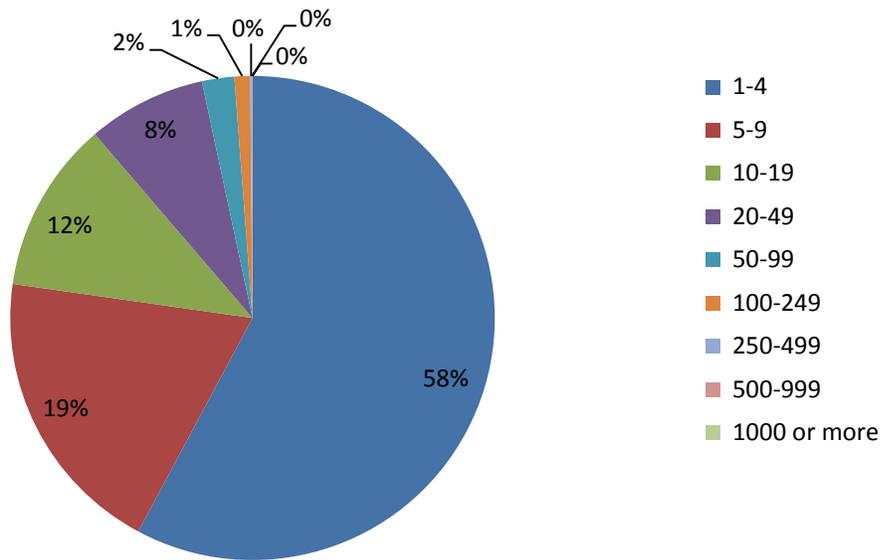
#### **Per Mount Pleasant Demographic Report - 2011**

#### **PER CRBJ Book of Lists - 2012\***

<b>Company Name</b>	<b>FT, In-House Employees</b>	<b>Company Name</b>	<b>FT, In-House Employees</b>
East Cooper Medical Center	748	East Cooper Medical Center	753
Target Stores	500	Roper St. Francis Mount Pleasant Hospital	336
Mount Pleasant Hospital	340	Sandpiper Retirement Community	300
Motley Rice, LLC	315	Mediterranean Shipping Co. USA Inc.	290
Wild Wing Café	310	Franke at Seaside	245
Sandpiper Retirement Community	300	G4S	200
Mediterranean Shipping Co. (USA)	290	Sticky Fingers Smokehouse	150
Franke at Seaside	245	Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum	113
Whole Foods	204	Charleston Harbor Resort & Marina	100
The Agent Owned Realty Co.	172	The Palms of Mount Pleasant	100
Mount Pleasant Manor	153	Somerby of Mount Pleasant	100
Charleston Harbor Resort & Marina	150	Wando Trucking Co.	90
Sticky Fingers	150		

\*Based on information provided to CRBJ. Not complete.

## Mount Pleasant Businesses by Employment Size



Source: Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, 2010 census

The latest census report indicates Mount Pleasant is comprised of small business, with 97% employing less than 50 employees and 89% employing less than 20 employees. The advantages of this market are small and midsize companies create jobs at a faster pace than their larger counterparts. These numbers also underscore the importance of our existing Business Development Strategy.

### **EXISTING STRATEGY:**

In 2010, the Town shifted its focus on economic development from solely seeking value-added projects to a blend of true economic development and small market business recruitment and retention. The goal was to promote the growth and economic health of our business community. The Business Development Initiative was anticipated to create value-added services to our potential and existing local business community, while confirming Mount Pleasant as a business-friendly community.

An important distinction in the Business Development Initiative and the Economic Development Strategy is the difference between Economic Development and Business Development. Economic Development pertains to value-added businesses that derive a significant portion of revenues from outside the Tri-County area. By their nature they are of particular value to the community due to their capital investment potential, substantial number of high-paying, quality jobs and their minimal impact to the environment or services to the town. Prior to 2010, recruitment efforts were focused solely on these value-added projects. In contrast, Business Development refers to the retention and growth of our existing, small-market businesses that thrive on the demographics of our community.

“Up to 80% of job growth in any community – whether a fast or slow-growth community – is generated by existing businesses, not through business attraction.”

David L. Birch, *Job Creation in America*

Retention is a critical component of our strategy and accordingly the Town created the Business Development Coordinator position. The primary responsibility of that position was to build relationships with business owners and connect them with contacts, resources and other information they need, but didn't have time to research. Essentially the Town created a Customer Satisfaction Program to help support the success of our businesses and to reinforce the business-friendly decree.

The objectives of the economic development and business development strategy were compiled using the Comprehensive Plan as a guide. The following goals were considered in the development of the Economic Development Strategy:

#### **Economic Development**

- Recruit a higher education institution or satellite campus
- Promote the growth of existing businesses and the recruitment of new businesses that are compatible with the Town's future vision.
- Continue to develop and implement redevelopment plans for older and underdeveloped areas of Mount Pleasant that are well served by public infrastructure.

#### **Maturation / Revitalization**

- Focus redevelopment and revitalization efforts on older commercial areas which are served by existing infrastructure and are underutilized; ensure a redevelopment is compatible with existing residential neighborhoods.
- Increase the flexibility of the zoning code to accommodate new types of development, including mixed use, so long as they are compatible with their surrounding context and sensitive to nearby neighborhoods.

#### **Placemaking**

- Develop a series of nodes with include a wide variety of land uses and public spaces. Nodes should include a wide variety of commercial, civic, and residential land uses and should not intrude upon existing residential neighborhoods.
- Develop one or more destinations for tourism, business conventions, events, culture and arts for Mount Pleasant to increase the attractiveness of the community for all ages.
- Maintain and expand the quality and location of public spaces throughout Mount Pleasant, including the introduction of pocket parks to infill areas to serve as accessible gathering places within nodes of activity.

### **THE CHALLENGE:**

The town acknowledges the barriers to entry include restrictive ordinances (i.e. zoning), limited product and inadequate infrastructure. The most significant barrier is pricing, as the high standard of living drives up the cost of land and lease space.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEFINITION:**

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Understanding our community profile as well as studying citizen input over time has yielded the following definition of economic development for Mount Pleasant.

***Economic activity that advances Mount Pleasant’s quality of life and that provides its citizens with opportunities to meet their needs and aspirations.***

These descriptive concepts help develop meaning, connections and inspiration to further define economic development:

### Economic Development Concepts

- Protect & Grow Quality of Life
- Personal & Economic Well-Being
- Capitalize on Strengths
- Support Innovation
- Attraction of Quality Jobs
- Build Prosperity
- Maximize Potential
- Attractive & Desirable Environment
- Enhance Competitiveness
- Sustainable Growth
- Create better conditions for economic growth & employment generation

Quality of life is important to Mount Pleasant residents. Yet, at the same time, there exists a desire amongst residents for the community to meet economic needs so that they can sustain their needs and flourish. It is presumed in this strategy that the Town of Mount Pleasant will not pursue Economic Development prospects inconsistent with this definition.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MISSION:**

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***To advance Mount Pleasant’s quality of life by fostering an economic environment that is vibrant, favorable to job creation, and that promotes the general prosperity of the community.***

The mission will not be executed purely through Town efforts alone, but by aligning ourselves with the Charleston Regional Development Alliance’s Opportunity Next Strategy and Charleston County Economic Development efforts. The Opportunity Next objectives are to supercharge the region’s economy, strengthen employment and to establish Charleston as an international hub for business and talent. Charleston County Economic Development is dedicated to recruiting new business, growing existing industry and improving Charleston business climate. Since their efforts are consistent with our community’s definition of economic development, we will partner regionally as it will improve our chances for success and limit the unnecessary use of resources needed to achieve success.

## **GOALS:**

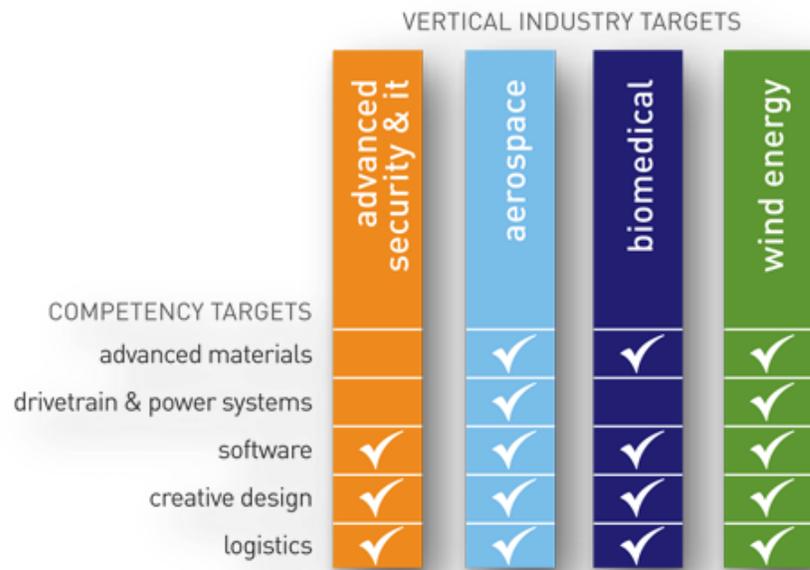
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1. Align strategy with Charleston County Economic Development, Charleston Regional Development Alliance and Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce strategy based on Mount Pleasant capabilities and strengths, utilizing the Opportunity Next Competency and Industry targets.
2. Support the retention and growth of existing industries/businesses, specifically those selling products and services beyond the region.
3. Update the Town's Business Development and Incubator strategy.
4. Escalate efforts to improve and attract human capital as a means for economic development.
5. Explore methods to attract and support the film industry.
6. Establish channel of communication and marketing to further develop and maintain support from the community for economic development.
7. Develop performance measures to evaluate the success for our economic development strategy.

**OBJECTIVES:**

**Goal #1** Align strategy with Charleston County Economic Development, Charleston Regional Development Alliance and Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce strategy based on Mount Pleasant capabilities and strengths, utilizing the Opportunity Next Competency and Industry targets.

**Objective #1** Focus recruitment efforts on competency targets: Advanced Materials, Drivetrain & Power Systems, Software, Creative Design and Logistics; as well as quality jobs compatible with Mount Pleasant’s economic environment: Healthcare, R&D, Engineering and Tourism. Priority will be businesses that sell products and services beyond the region.



**Objective #2** By end of calendar year 2013, determine where these preferred businesses/industries can locate and consider designing conceptual plan. Analyze each site and determine infrastructure needs. Infrastructure includes roads, water & sewer, electrical, communication, and technology.

Available Property Zoned ED	Acres	Advantage	Disadvantage
Carolina Park	150	Blank slate, Multi-County Park designation	Inadequate infrastructure, location not easily accessible to interstate, port
Wando Park Boulevard	5	Access to 526, Wando Park Blvd improvements (TIF project)	Inadequate infrastructure
Seacoast Property @ 526	40	Access to 526	Proximity to residential; capped traffic counts; compatibility with existing industry nearby
Watermark	3	Access to 526	Proximity to residential
Market at Oakland Vacant Building	50,000sf	Shell building designed for bio-tech	Tied up in litigation; construction not complete

Other Opportunities not zoned ED	Notes
Urban Corridor	Appropriate uses for Economic Development within this district (i.e. corporate headquarters). With emphasis shifting towards a knowledge-based economy, office space is needed.
Waterfront Gateway District	Opportunity for tourism development (i.e. hotel or convention center would qualify as Economic Development).
TMS No. 540-00-00-032	11.8 acre parcel between MOB and Hobcaw Creek Plantation, zoning is part of Belle Hall PD. The Comprehensive Plan recommends Commercial land uses. Due to its proximity to Wando Park Boulevard, the port, I-526, and area businesses the recommendation is to support development compatible with this ED strategy.

Town of Mount Pleasant owned land	Location	Notes
Fire Station 3	355 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Would need to sell at below market value; legal concerns
Wando Park	Wando Park Boulevard	Cumbersome; not viable option

<b>Objective #3</b>	<p>By August 2013, staff will prepare for Town Council’s (or its appropriate committee’s) consideration an amendment to the Economic Development zoning/ordinances to cover those areas identified, if needed. Issues to review in the Economic Development Zoning Ordinance (<a href="#">§ 156.324</a>) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective criteria, including non-highway intensive, non-obnoxious noise. Current criteria are subject to the zoning administrator.</li> <li>• Height restrictions</li> <li>• Antiquated uses</li> <li>• Flexibility to limit developer’s need to rezone</li> </ul>
<b>Objective #4</b>	Explore further the creation of an Economic Development Corporation to acquire or manage those sites/properties.
<b>Objective #5</b>	By July 2013, identify potential incentives the Town could offer beyond the existing program and beyond what is offered by <a href="#">Charleston County</a> and the <a href="#">State of South Carolina</a> . The Economic Development Incentive Grant ( <a href="#">§ 117.01- 117.07</a> ) allows for a reimbursement on impact fees, permit and review fees, and business license for up to two years for eligible businesses.
<b>Objective #6</b>	Encourage recruitment of start-up, incubator type businesses that meet the core competencies of the Opportunity Next Strategy or are compatible with Mount Pleasant’s business environment. Recruit and select participants in the Town’s incubator program.

<b>Goal #2</b>	<b>Support the retention and growth of existing industry/businesses, specifically those selling products and services beyond the region.</b>
<b>Objective #1</b>	With assistance from Charleston County Economic Development Office, establish a specific on-going plan to pro-actively communicate with existing companies to determine their level of risk and identify resources necessary to ensure retention and growth.
<b>Objective #2</b>	By July 2013, identify potential incentives the Town could offer beyond the existing program and beyond what is offered by Charleston County and the State of South Carolina. The Economic Development Incentive Grant ( <a href="#">§ 117.01- 117.07</a> ) allows for a reimbursement on impact fees, permit and review fees, and business license for up to two years for eligible businesses.
<b>Objective #3</b>	Actively participate in the implementation of the Charleston – Brookings Metro Export Initiative.

<b>Goal #3</b>	<b>Update the Town's business development and incubator strategy.</b>
<b>Objective #1</b>	By June 2013 staff will prepare for Town Council's (or its appropriate committee's) consideration an updated business development strategy to be implemented by the Planning & Development Department ( <i>refer to Appendix A for existing business development strategy</i> ). The business development strategy should include support of appropriate retail development to create a stronger sense of place and quality of life for our community.
<b>Objective #2</b>	By June 2013 staff will prepare for Town Council's (or its appropriate committee's) consideration an updated incubator strategy to be implemented by the Planning & Development Department ( <i>refer to Appendix B for existing incubator policy</i> ). Recommendations for the Business Incubator include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadening the criteria for eligible businesses beyond "Creative" to include industries that meet the core competencies of the Opportunity Next strategy or are compatible with Mount Pleasant's business environment and have a scalable business model.</li> <li>• Relocating facility to Coleman Boulevard. Determine additional sites/properties and resources available, if any.</li> <li>• Investigate partnership with a local college <i>and/or</i> entrepreneur group <i>and/or</i> non-profit organization to serve as the selection committee, provide mentorship, resources and access to capital.</li> <li>• Identify potential incentives the Town could offer beyond the existing program.</li> <li>• Operations of the incubator will fall as a duty of the Business Development Coordinator.</li> <li>• Create a transition process to shepherd graduating businesses into office space.</li> </ul>

Goal #4	Escalate efforts to improve and attract human capital as a means for economic development.
<b>Objective #1</b>	For the first time information pertaining to where young professionals locate indicate they choose a city to live first, and then seek a job. The Town should actively advance quality of life by fostering an environment attracting talent that complements the industries desired in our community. Actively participating in the implementation of Accelerate Greater Charleston; a project lead by the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, will help build and strengthen a talented workforce. Supporting improvements on Coleman Boulevard will generate a thriving city center where businesses and people come together for the good of all and create an attractive investment environment that is self-perpetuating.
<b>Objective #2</b>	Develop and support special events that build a sense of community, contribute to the area's economic development and add to the quality of life of Mount Pleasant citizens.
<b>Objective #3</b>	By December 2013, staff will prepare for Town Council's (or its appropriate committee's) consideration an updated Tourism Action Plan ( <i>refer to Appendix C for 2009 Tourism Action Plan</i> ) that positions Mount Pleasant as a premier destination for tourists and day visitors through its proximity to historic Charleston, while broadening the Town's tax base and employment opportunities for the community through marketing and appropriate tourism product development.

<b>Goal #5</b>	<b>Explore ways to attract and support the film industry.</b>
<b>Objective #1</b>	Actively communicate with SC Film Council to discuss potential projects and review state legislative issues that could help or hinder film projects.
<b>Objective #2</b>	By end of fiscal year 2014, identify potential incentives the Town could offer in support of local film projects.

<b>Goal #6</b>	<b>Establish channel of communication and marketing to further develop and maintain support from the community for economic development</b>
<b>Objective #1</b>	Utilize full complement of media and economic development allies to communicate economic development initiatives, accomplishments and future plans on an on-going basis.
<b>Objective #2</b>	By end of fiscal year 2013, staff will present to Town Council a comprehensive marketing strategy for economic development, tourism and residential relocation. The economic development marketing materials will consist of testimonials, success stories and ads that will sell “like” companies locally and regionally.
<b>Objective #3</b>	By the end of fiscal year 2013, staff will investigate benefit to purchase the MLS real estate listing service from Charleston Trident Association of Realtors to promote available inventory on the Town’s marketing website.

**Goal #7****Develop performance measures to evaluate the success of our economic development strategy****Objective #1**

By the end of fiscal year 2013, staff will prepare for Town Council's (or its appropriate committee's) consideration meaningful performance measures. It is understood that to be meaningful, these measures will not all be quantitative and may not be entirely in the Town's control. What is important is that we are measuring performance to determine effectiveness and whether adjustments are required.

**Controlled Measures**

- Number of brochures distributed
- Number of economic development inquiries received
- Number of presentations made to businesses and civic groups

**Limited control measures {requires secondary research}**

- Number of Economic Development projects
- Growth in appraised value of an area (i.e. Coleman Boulevard)
- Number of new jobs created through ED efforts (business relations, expansions and redevelopment)
- Vacant space leased per ED efforts (in square feet)
- Number of business licenses issued
- Number of new business licenses issued
- Value of new construction in an area (i.e. Downtown)
- Value of investment created through ED efforts
- Hotel occupancy, ADR, RevPAR
- Job to resident ratio
- Sales tax per capita
- Existing and available industrial space
- Office & Retail vacancy rates
- Mean hourly wage of jobs created through the ED department
- Percentage of owner-occupied households
- Median household income
- Ranking of Mount Pleasant in leading indicator reports
- Percentage increase in business tax base
- Percentage of expansion of the commercial tax base

**Incentive ROI for existing ED incentive grant recipients – long term measure**

- Total dollar amount of incentives
- Pre-development Revenue
- Developed Property Revenue
- Total Jobs Created

**TIMELINE:**

<b>GOAL #1</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Focus recruitment efforts on competency targets and jobs compatible with Mount Pleasant's economic environment	On-going
Outline locations preferred businesses can locate and consider designing conceptual plans	December 2013
Economic Development zoning amendment	August 2013
Explore further the need for an Economic Development Corporation	On-going
Identify potential incentives for new industry	July 2013
Recruit & select incubator residents	On-going

<b>GOAL #2</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Establish communication plan with Charleston County ED office	On-going
Identify potential incentives for existing industry	July 2013
Participate in Charleston-Brookings Metro Export Initiative	On-going

<b>GOAL #3</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Update business development and incubator strategy	June 2013

<b>GOAL #4</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Actively advance quality of life through various projects	On-going
Develop and support special events	On-going
Update Tourism Action Plan	December 2013

<b>GOAL #5</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Actively communicate with SC Film Council	On-going
Identify potential incentives for film industry	June 2014

<b>GOAL #6</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Communicate economic development updates	On-going
Present Comprehensive Marketing Strategy	June 2013
Investigate purchase of MLS real estate listing service	June 2013

<b>GOAL #7</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Present performance measures	June 2013

# *Appendix A*

## Mount Pleasant Business Development Initiative

### Economic Development Committee - 12.01.09

Goal: Create and implement the Mount Pleasant Business Development Initiative to promote the growth and economic health of our business community.

This business development strategy is comprised of three components: Business Retention, Business Recruitment and Business Empowerment. The Town anticipates this initiative will create value-added services to our potential and existing local business community, while confirming Mount Pleasant as a business-friendly community. Consequently the Town's economy is stimulated by allowing owners to earn money, support their families, reinvest in their business and offer employment opportunities to workers. The strategy should cultivate public investment in the community.

In the short term, the Business Development Initiative should reenergize a business community distressed by the recession. Yet the fundamental objective of this strategy is to create an attractive investment environment that is self perpetuating.

#### SECTION ONE: BUSINESS RETENTION

Business Retention is the process of building a relationship with the business owner and connecting the owner to the economic, community and workforce development system. Essentially this is a Customer Satisfaction Program that the Town implements to help support the success of its businesses and to reinforce the business-friendly decree. Some business owners are too busy to seek out information and often times too busy to notice inefficiencies. The purpose of this component is to be a source of information and to provide referrals for their requests. The focus areas of business retention include developing programs for district promotion, financial resources, workforce development resources and recognition of successful local businesses.

- I. **Business Retention** - *"Up to 80% of job growth in any community – whether a fast or slow-growth community – is generated by existing businesses, not through business attraction."* (Birch, Job Creation in America)
  - a. District Promotion – build a framework of districts in Mount Pleasant that are represented by business and property owners, bankers, citizens, business associations, and public officials in each district. New businesses, creative use of space, and sharpened competitiveness are outcomes of a more vital business district.
    - i. Define districts by utilizing the Town's Comprehensive Plan while considering special district associations (i.e. Mount Pleasant Old Shopping District).
    - ii. Establish contact with designated districts
    - iii. Develop promotional strategy that complements each districts' unique assets
    - iv. Form a partnership that empowers each district
  - b. Financial Resources
    - i. Host forum of financial institutions
    - ii. Establish financial working group

- iii. Promote services to local businesses, while offering resources for any applicable county incentives (i.e. 5-year abatement of County property taxes)
  - c. Workforce Development Resources
    - i. Identify skills that are in demand
    - ii. Provide referrals to businesses in need of training, by maintaining an up-to-date resources manual that will help match business with skilled workers. Example of resource referrals include:
      - 1. readySC
      - 2. Trident One-Stop Career Center
      - 3. Workkeys
      - 4. Incumbent Worker Training
      - 5. Trident Technical College
      - 6. Lowcountry Graduate Center
      - 7. South Carolina Export Consortium
    - iii. Establish a Middle College which matches curriculum with local skills and teaches necessary skills to expand the local cluster as a means to support businesses and prevent outmigration. (ex: healthcare, creative cluster)
  - d. Recognition
    - i. Letters of congratulations from the Mayor's office to Mount Pleasant based businesses recognizing their recently publicized accomplishments. (ex: Choate Construction and Johnson & Johnson)
    - ii. Reoccurring feature in Moultrie News listing CDT information with the option of highlighting businesses

## **PART TWO: BUSINESS RECRUITMENT**

Business recruitment creates economic diversification allowing all businesses to enjoy new opportunities and expand choices to citizens thereby encouraging them to shop locally. The Town's focus has shifted from solely seeking value-added economic development projects to a blend of true economic development and small market business recruitment. Both options expand the tax base, while creating jobs and stabilization to a stressed economy. A hardship in Mount Pleasant's recruitment efforts will be the high cost of land. Through creative measures and research support, the Town can sell the quality of life obtained by working (and possibly living) in Mount Pleasant to offset the possible financial struggles of purchasing land or renting office space.

### **II. Business Recruitment**

- a. True Economic Development – The traditional form of business recruitment, where businesses that could relocate anywhere are targeted. The residents of a community are not the target market.
  - i. Create Information Piece / Tool (*currently being developed as part of the strategic marketing initiative*)
    - 1. Cost of doing business in Mount Pleasant vs. competition

2. Mount Pleasant Incentive Package
3. Review of plan review process
- ii. Obtain and distribute regional and local market data
- iii. Establish constant interaction with Economic Development agencies and the point of contact
  1. Charleston Regional Development Alliance (Steve Warner)
  2. Charleston County Economic Development Offices (Steve Dykes & Ashley Keene)
  3. Charleston Chamber of Commerce / ThinkTec (Pennie Bingham & Jill Galmarini)
  4. New Carolina (Beth Meredith)
  5. Charleston Digital Corridor (Ernest Andrade)
- iv. Discuss state legislative issues that could hurt/help potential economic development projects (i.e. H 3693, allowing a microbrewery to conduct beer tastings).
- b. Local market driven business – recruiting businesses that complement the community’s profile
  - i. Create Information Piece / Tool (*currently being developed as part of the strategic marketing initiative*)
    1. Cost of doing business in Mount Pleasant vs. competition
    2. Mount Pleasant Incentive Package (currently only available for annexation candidates)
  - ii. Obtain and distribute local market data
  - iii. Establish constant interaction with similar recruitment agencies
    1. Charleston Chamber of Commerce / ThinkTec
    2. Mount Pleasant Business & Professional Association
  - iv. Discuss possible financial incentives, to include using business license fees as a means to stimulate growth. Below are some options staff can research:
    1. Reduction or no business license fee for companies in their first year of existence
    2. Any business willing to renovate a downtown space that has been vacant for at least three months, forgiveness on business license fees for two years, and to waive building permit fees entirely for such a renovation, and long as it is permitted within their ARB and zoning requirements (Incentive for specific areas – i.e. Coleman).
- c. Real Estate Connection
  - i. Education – Real estate professionals are constantly “selling” the local communities to prospective tenants, yet not all are aware of Mount Pleasant’s assets. From quality of life, school system, tax rates, capital projects, and financial incentives, this group can be educated in quarterly sessions and/or through email updates.

- ii. Listings – maintain an up-to-date listing of residential, office, retail and industrial space in Mount Pleasant

### **SECTION THREE: BUSINESS EMPOWERMENT**

The Business Empowerment component provides assistance to current and prospective business owners, by providing a wide variety of information and guidance in central and easily accessible locations. Notable economist, Dr. Bruce Yandle stated, “This is a time when entrepreneurship moves forward. When large layoffs occur and major financial firms experience shutdown, large numbers of bright, experienced people take the opportunity to start a small, highly specialized firm. Then these firms band together to take on larger projects. They stimulate the economy.” Empowerment is the giving of an ability. This component focuses on enabling and empowering business owners in Mount Pleasant by providing solutions through a business incubator, a business task force, and Town supported website.

- III. Business Empowerment – *The Small Business Administration reports more than half of new businesses will fail in their first five year, while a study done by Inc.com and NBIA (National Business Incubator Association) revealed that 80% of new businesses fail within the first five years.*
  - a. Develop a Creative Business Incubator to be located on Coleman Boulevard. The Town’s Comprehensive Plan and the CDT’s Tourism Plan discuss the need to create a creative district, and the most viable option is Coleman Boulevard. Artistic and creative-minded individuals desire living in vibrant downtown areas, which fits the vision of Coleman Boulevard’s Revitalization plan. Knowledge-based companies are part of the generative economy and are less susceptible to the economic cycles that characterize other sectors of the economy. Tapping into New Carolina’s Creative Cluster will not only make Mount Pleasant more competitive among the region, it will accelerate the redevelopment of Mount Pleasant’s downtown.
    - i. The Creative Industries Cluster focuses on areas such as preservation and restoration, cultural heritage, architecture and urban design, performing arts, visual arts, culinary arts, literature and publishing, and digital media and design. “Many of the firms that comprise the creative cluster are small and emerging companies. These entrepreneurial firms need access to equity capital in order to launch a business and grow.” – Creative Industries Cluster Analysis
    - ii. Stephen Warner of the Charleston Regional Development Alliance stated, “We believe that the growth of the Creative Industries Cluster could lead to higher wages and greater economic sustainability.” Charleston Digital Corridor reported average salaries of \$83,636 in 2009 (increase of \$7,500 from 2008)
    - iii. The community benefits through economic prosperity and job creation.
    - iv. Determine Incubator specifics (i.e. size, features, programming, expenses)
      - 1. [www.charlestonflagship.com](http://www.charlestonflagship.com) (example facility)

2. Include programming in various topics: Business financing, marketing, increasing competitiveness, etc...
  3. First incubator on Coleman Blvd, with plans to develop more in other areas of Mount Pleasant.
- b. Appoint a Small Business Task Force that serves as a liaison between the Town, its elected officials and the small business community. The Task Force will recommend innovative solutions to political, social and economic issues that affect small business and promote growth and prosperity.
  - c. Develop a website as ancillary support to the Business Development Initiative.

## *Appendix B*



TOWN OF  
*Mount Pleasant SC*

Donna Merry, Business Development Coordinator  
100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, S.C. 29464  
[dmerry@tompsec.com](mailto:dmerry@tompsec.com), 843.884.1229

# BIZ INC.

## PURPOSE

BIZ INC will foster and strengthen a culture of creative entrepreneurialism in Mount Pleasant, leading to vigorous and self-perpetuating economic growth.

## MISSION

BIZ INC. aspires to have a positive impact on the community's economic health by maximizing the success of emerging companies by being, itself, a dynamic model of a sustainable, efficient business operation.

To assist in realizing this objective, the Town of Mount Pleasant will:

- Support the development of emerging companies through sustainable business operations, exemplary programs and services, and a comprehensive infrastructure, all integrated into broader economic development goals of Mount Pleasant; and
- Leverage community partnerships that are necessary to deliver effective programs and services to start-up companies.

## ELIGIBLE BUSINESSES

- A. Biz Inc.'s goal is to attract, nurture and promote the creative economy in Mount Pleasant.
- B. The term "creative" is used to describe firms that produce and/or distribute products and services for which the aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional engagement of the consumer represents the chief component of value for those goods and services in the marketplace (Parliament Report, May 2010).
- C. This definition of "creative" moves beyond what might be traditionally thought of as the "arts" to include such design-intensive activities as architecture, interactive design, and software design (Parliament Report, May 2010).
- D. Generally, Biz Inc. will be comprised of *non-competing* businesses that fit into the "Creative Cluster." Parliament, a group that supports the creative communities in Charleston and all of South Carolina, defined the Creative Cluster as comprising the following sub-clusters: (Parliament Report, May 2010)
  - Multimedia Arts
    - Film & Video Arts
    - Digital Media and Design
  - Performing and Visual Arts
  - Architecture and Urban Design
  - Literary Arts and Publishing
  - Cultural Heritage
  - Culinary Arts

## APPLICATION PROCESS

- A. Submit completed application, business plan, and \$50.00 application fee to:  
Town of Mount Pleasant  
100 Ann Edwards Lane  
Mount Pleasant, SC 29464  
ATTN: **Donna Merry**  
*\*Please make checks payable to Town of Mount Pleasant*
- B. Application and business plan should demonstrate the following:  
Clear need for incubator space  
Qualifying creative based company  
Unique vision, well-developed business plan
- C. Tenants are required to have a Mount Pleasant business license, which must be obtained before moving into Biz Inc. The license should be displayed in tenant's office space.
- D. Tenants have two (2) business days to verbally accept before the space is offered to the next candidate.
- E. Upon verbal acceptance, receipt of first month rent (\$250), and proof of a Mount Pleasant business license, the tenant may move in.
- F. Applicants are admitted on a first come, first serve basis.
- G. Generally, the incubator will work most effectively when comprised of *non-competing* businesses. The Town of Mount Pleasant reserves the right to waive this requirement, for any reason, so long as the outcome is in the best interest of Biz Inc. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

## PAYMENT POLICIES

- A. Office space in Biz Inc. is \$250/month. Rent will not be prorated under any circumstances.
- B. First (1) month's rent is required before tenants can move in to Biz Inc.
- C. Rent is due on the first (1) day of the month and considered late at the close of business on the third (3) day.
- D. A \$25.00 fee is assessed each day rent is past due, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Biz Inc. Manager.
- E. Tenants delinquent after fifteen (15) days will be evicted from the incubator, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Biz Inc. Manager.

## BIZ FACILITY

- A. No long-term commitments, rental is month-to-month.
  - Should a tenant decide to leave before the designated twelve (12) month term is up, thirty (30) days notice should be given to the Biz Inc. Manager.
- B. The facility is designed to serve the transitional business needs of the local creative economy.
  - Resident's benefit from associating & networking with other quality start-ups, investors, and entrepreneurs.
- C. Twenty-four (24) hour access.
- D. Free on-site parking for tenants.
- E. Biz Inc. is designed as a transitional space with a maximum lease period of one (1) year.
  - Tenants may apply for a one (1) time, three (3) month extension.
  - Request must be submitted sixty (60) days before the tenant's lease expires.
  - Requests are handled on a case-by-case basis by the Biz Inc. Manager.
  - If an extension is granted, a one (1) time \$150 fee is charged and rent remains at \$250 for the remaining three (3) month extension.
- F. Once a business outgrows the incubator, the Biz Inc. Manager will work with outside agencies to relocate incubator companies to spaces in Mount Pleasant that suit their needs.
- G. The Biz Inc. facility includes:
  - No long term lease commitments
  - Furnished offices, ready to use
  - Resource library
  - Networking events
  - Educational seminars
  - Conference room
  - Free parking
  - In/outbound mail and package handling
  - Janitorial services and building security
  - Twenty-four (24) hour access

## UTILITIES

- A. Tenants have access to the following utilities at no additional charge:
  - Phone/Fax service
  - Internet
  - Electric
- B. If a business requires a service that we don't offer, the Town's IT department will work with tenants to accommodate; additional fees may apply and will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## BIZ LIBRARY

- A. Reference materials and publications are NOT to be taken from the facility. They are allowed in business spaces but should not leave the premises.
  - Tenants are expected to openly communicate and respect each other as well as the office space and resources within it.
  - Tenants are encouraged to use the resources provided with the understanding that library materials must be returned within a reasonable timeframe.
- B. Individuals are expected to sign publications out before taking to their desk.
  - Tenants are to arrange amongst themselves, an acceptable timeframe for materials to be returned, so everyone has adequate access to information.
- C. A fee will be charged for misplaced library materials. The last person to sign the publication out will be assessed the fee. If this is disputed, the fee will be equally divided amongst tenants and due with the next month's rent payment.

## CONFERENCE ROOM PROCEDURES

- A. The conference room can be reserved for meetings.
- B. Tenant scheduled meetings take precedence, **before** a time slot is reserved.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR RESIDENT COMPANIES

- A. Three (3), six (6), and nine (9) month progress reports are due in the form of low-key presentations to the Biz Inc. Manager. The purpose of these reports will be to assess progress, identify potential issues and help work through them.
- B. A final presentation is required at the end of a businesses' term. Tenants will demonstrate what they've accomplished and where they're going next, at a formal Town sponsored networking function. It will be a public event that introduces business owners to new contacts, potential investors, partners, and customers.

## GENERAL WORK RULES

- A. Biz Inc. operates under the direction of the Town of Mount Pleasant; policies & procedures have been established to provide regulations specific to the incubator and are subject to change.
- B. The Town of Mount Pleasant wants to encourage a safe and pleasant work atmosphere. This can only happen when everyone cooperates and commits to appropriate standards of behavior.

- C. The following is a list of behaviors that the Town of Mount Pleasant and Biz Inc. considers unacceptable. Any persons found engaging in these behaviors will be subject to eviction:
1. Willfully damaging, destroying, or stealing property belonging to fellow employees or the company.
  2. Fighting or engaging in horseplay or disorderly conduct.
  3. Coming into Biz Inc. under the influence of alcohol or any drug, or bringing alcoholic beverages or drugs onto company property.
  4. Intentionally giving any false or misleading information to obtain entry into the incubator.
  5. Using threatening or abusive language.
  6. Willfully or habitually violating safety or health regulations.
  7. Failing to wear clothing conforming to standards set by the company.
  8. Not taking proper care of, neglecting, or abusing company equipment and tools.
  9. Using company equipment in an unauthorized manner.
  10. Possessing firearms or weapons of any kind on Town property.

## SANCTIONS

- A. Complaints are to be taken to the Biz Inc. Manager and sanctions will be issued at the Manager's discretion.
- B. The first sanction results in a \$100 fine and a written warning placing the tenant on probation. A second sanction results in immediate eviction.

## EVICITION

- A. Tenants may be sanctioned for any action deemed inappropriate or unethical. The first incident warrants a \$100 fine and written notification that the business is on probation until leaving Biz Inc. A tenant receiving two (2) written sanctions will be evicted, effective immediately.

## APPEALS

- A. Sanctions may be appealed in writing, to the Town Administrator *up to five (5) days* after the sanction was issued. The request for consideration must state the specific reasons for appealing the Biz Inc. Manager's decision. The Town Administrator shall take appropriate action to render a written decision *within thirty (30) days* of receipt of the tenant's appeal.

## **BIZ INC. MANAGER**

The Manager is employed by the Town of Mount Pleasant and authorized to enforce all rules and regulations, collect rent and fees, and handle all disputes. Unless otherwise designated by the Town Administrator, the Biz Inc. Manager is:

**Donna Merry, Business Development Coordinator**

Town of Mount Pleasant 843-884-1229 (office)  
100 Ann Edwards Lane  
Mount Pleasant, SC 29464 843-856-1080 (fax)

The Manager is the point of contact for questions, complaints, and concerns regarding Biz Inc.

The Manager is responsible for collecting payments and fees, coordinating move in/out dates, and scheduling tenant progress reports and final presentations.

The Manager is responsible for coordinating educational seminars, forums, and events with key business professionals in the area. These programs will all be designed around the needs of the current tenants and are subject to change as new businesses cycle through the incubator.



# BIZ INC.

## **POLICY & PROCEDURE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

I acknowledge the receipt of one (1) copy of the Biz Inc. Policy and Procedures booklet. I read, understand, and agree to comply with all the policies set forth herein.

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## *Appendix C*

Town of Mount Pleasant  
*Community Development & Tourism Office*



Tourism Action Plan  
FY 2009

Submitted by:

Ashley A. McKenzie  
Community Development & Tourism Officer

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.	PRESENT SOUTH CAROLINA TOURISM MARKET .....	3
III.	MOUNT PLEASANT TOURISM ASSETS.....	6
IV.	MOUNT PLEASANT TOURISM CONCERNS .....	8
V.	TOURISM MARKET PROFILE.....	9
VI.	TOURISM GOALS & OBJECTIVES.....	12
VII.	CONCLUSION.....	18

APPENDIX 1 – 2008 ACCOMMODATIONS OCCUPANCY REPORT

APPENDIX 2 – 2008 MOUNT PLEASANT VISITOR INFORMATION REQUESTS

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is the number one industry in South Carolina and it is one of the most important industries in Mount Pleasant. It is a valued source of revenue and we rely on its ability to promote our community and our image nationwide. This Tourism Plan was developed based on the findings of a Mount Pleasant Tourism Strategy meeting held with local community professionals from the lodging, development and tourism industries as well as through research findings listed in the South Carolina Tourism Action Plan. The purpose of this plan is to create a strategic approach on how Mount Pleasant can position itself as a premier tourist destination.

In October 2006, the South Carolina Tourism Action Plan was published by Tourism Development International Ltd as tasked by the South Carolina Tourism Cluster Committee. Based on their findings a priority recommendation list was created to improve upon South Carolina tourism. The report states "that the current organization of tourism, the lack of planning and asset preservation, and inadequate investment – in particular in marketing - pose the most significant threats to the future of tourism to and within the state." Market research findings indicate culture and heritage tourism as one of the fastest growing tourism segments, with golf, soft adventure, and beach set to continue to grow over the next decade.

There are five components of tourism which include attractions, promotion, infrastructure, services and hospitality. Lists designating strengths, weaknesses potential opportunities and threats were created based on these five components of tourism in Mount Pleasant. The following definitions will be used for these components:

Attractions – natural and built features

Promotion – marketing tools and promotional activities

Infrastructure – transport, water and power, community facilities

Services – hotels, motels, shops, restaurants, campsites

Hospitality – this influences tourists' perception of their stay and whether they are likely to return

After reviewing South Carolina, Charleston Area and Mount Pleasant tourism characteristics, a list of goals and objectives have been identified to guide the Town and the hospitality industry with the enhancement of tourism in Mount Pleasant. These goals and objectives are associated with the five components of tourism: attractions, promotion, infrastructure, services, and hospitality. To improve attractions, the Town should capture the eco and cultural-tourism markets by developing more walking trails and park, create a historical marker trail and capitalize on its position within the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. Infrastructure progress includes the improvement of sidewalks and bike lanes, through the Coleman Boulevard Revitalization. Encouraging the development of full-service accommodations and restaurants to the area will improve service options. Maintaining research and continued training on tourism developments will improve Mount Pleasant's position as a tourist destination. Although all important components of this tourism plan, the primary goal is to develop a strategic

marketing plan for Mount Pleasant. This plan will start the implementation process of promoting Mount Pleasant, along with a new tourism website.

As the number one industry for the state and a primary revenue source for the Town of Mount Pleasant, it is vital that we be aggressive in the development of a complete tourism program. By examining ways to implement the goals and objectives set forth in the Mount Pleasant Tourism Action Plan, the Town can continue its strong growth in the industry.

## **II. PRESENT SOUTH CAROLINA TOURISM MARKET**

In order to accurately assess the tourism market in Mount Pleasant, it benefits to understand the state of South Carolina's tourism product. In October 2006, the South Carolina Tourism Action Plan was published by Tourism Development International Ltd as tasked by the South Carolina Tourism Cluster Committee. These research findings were based on a seven month study by a team of international experts who traveled across South Carolina to evaluate the state's approach to tourism to achieve the goal of increasing gross tourism product per visitor.

Based on their findings a priority recommendation list was created to improve upon South Carolina tourism. Below is an extraction of this recommendation list that can also be applied to the development of Mount Pleasant tourism.

- Tourism leaders at the regional and local level, including individual business owners and executives of local tourism authorities, should explore a model for cooperation and coordination on joint marketing with the state's tourism office. The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) is tasked with marketing the entire State and its regions.
- Access by highway and air are limiting factors to tourism growth in varying degrees around the state.
- Charleston is considered to offer an immediate potential direct entry point for increased services. The SC Action report recommends a concerted joint effort be undertaken to promote South Carolina as a destination to stage more flights and new routes.
- From the mountains to the sea, South Carolina has abundant natural and cultural resources to attract new groups of tourists who numbers are trending upward – including those interested in culture and history, outdoor adventure and eco-tourism. The study advises that protection of those resources is needed as development occurs to preserve those resources that are attraction new and repeat visitors in potentially fast-growing numbers.
- Service-industry jobs such as those in tourism are relatively inexpensive to create, but attrition is a problem, both on the job and in schools that are training workers for the hospitality industry. The study includes detailed recommendations on improving courses of study and improving retention through high school, technical college and university-level programs as well as in the workplace. It also recommends training be provided by specialists from such organizations as the Hospitality Association of South Carolina.

The report states "that the current organization of tourism, the lack of planning and asset preservation, and inadequate investment – in particular in marketing - pose the most significant threats to the future of tourism to and within the state." An important consideration is the current fragmentation between private sector organizations, geographically-based tourism regions and area CVB's. The State plan insinuates there is little formal liaison or reporting relationship between the tourism regions/CVBs and the state tourism organization. As this relates to Mount

Pleasant, the Town has maintained a strong relationship with the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and will seek to strengthen this link.

Although areas of improvement are needed within the State's tourism approach, the report notes strengths of development to include golf, beaches, nature, heritage rural areas and country towns. Market research findings indicate culture and heritage tourism as one of the fastest growing tourism segments, with golf, soft adventure, and beach set to continue to grow over the next decade. Nature, heritage and activity products are identified as in growing demand for today's tourists.

Developing a nature-based tourism product, attractive to increasingly environmentally sensitive tourists will require a well-conceived, focused and controlled development program. Stand alone, non-major, heritage sites are difficult to successfully market and get the tourist to visit. It is important therefore that they are part of an overall set of tourist experiences and not necessarily solely heritage experiences. Mount Pleasant can capitalize on the eco-tourism niche by partnering with area organizations such as The Center for Birds of Prey, Francis Marion National Forest, and Palmetto Island County Park.

The main point of the tourism action plan is to attract tourists with more disposable income, improve the yield and achieve a better spatial spread of the benefits of tourism. Tourism must become an economic supporter, rather than a consumer, of the natural resources and future tourism assets.

To maximize the gross tourist product per visitor, a SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities, threat) analysis was done on Historic Charleston and Resort Beaches. Nearly five million visitors are attracted to the area yearly with shopping, historic places, museums, and city sightseeing being the most popular visitor activities. Below is the South Carolina Tourism Action Plan's SWOT analysis for the Charleston area.

**Historic Charleston and Resort Beaches  
SWOT analysis  
2006 South Carolina Tourism Action Plan**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Product Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charleston-Icon City of Heritage/Culture</li> <li>• Plantation Homes</li> <li>• Colonial/Plantation Buildings</li> <li>• Inns/Boutique Hotels</li> <li>• Cuisine</li> <li>• Golf</li> <li>• Beaches/Coastal Resorts</li> <li>• Diversity of Product Offer</li> <li>• Berthing Facilities for Yachts</li> <li>• Waterways</li> <li>• Parks</li> <li>• Civil War</li> <li>• War of Independence</li> <li>• Southern Hospitality</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Product Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Direct International Air Access</li> <li>• Poor Service/Negative Attitude at Highway Service Points</li> <li>• Lack of New Product Development</li> <li>• Funding of Tourism/Lack on Incentives</li> <li>• Inadequacy of 5* Full Services Hotels</li> <li>• Run-down Areas</li> <li>• Restricted Opening Hours at Attractions</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Product Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop more Heritage/History Products</li> <li>• Charleston</li> <li>• Yacht Market</li> <li>• Native American and Gullah Heritage</li> <li>• 5* Hotel Developments/Branding</li> <li>• Packaging-City Breaks- Sports – Day Visitor Programs</li> <li>• Southern Culinary Experiences</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Product Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Funding of Tourism</li> <li>• Inadequate Marketing</li> <li>• Deterioration of Product from Inadequate Investment</li> <li>• Competitor Tourism Development Activity</li> <li>• Infrastructure/Roads</li> <li>• Labour Supply</li> <li>• Failure to Provide Direct International Air Access</li> <li>• Negative effect of Myrtle Beach on Rest of Coast</li> <li>• Perceived as High-Priced Destination</li> </ul>

### **III. MOUNT PLEASANT TOURISM ASSETS**

After examining the characteristics of a South Carolina and Charleston Area tourist, Mount Pleasant must position itself to attract a visitor that will maximize the town's potential as a premier tourism destination. There are five components of tourism which include attractions, promotion, infrastructure, services and hospitality. Based on a tourism discussion among community professionals involved within the lodging, development and hospitality industries, the following list was developed to assist with identification of Mount Pleasant's strengths, weaknesses, and potential opportunities:

#### **ATTRACTIONS**

- Beach Access
- Sweetgrass Baskets / History of Sweetgrass / Gullah History / Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Pavilion
- Major Festivals sponsored by the Town and other local organizations (includes Blessing of the Fleet, Children's Day, Farmers Market, Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival, Taste of Charleston, Battle of Secessionville, Lowcountry Oyster Festival, Cooper River Bridge Run, Fourth of July at Patriots Point, Scottish Highland Games)
- Patriots Point Maritime Museum, Congressional Medal of Honor, Boone Hall Plantation, Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge, Palmetto Island County Park, Shem Creek and Old Village Historic District
- Golf Courses: Charleston National Country Club, Dunes West Golf Club, Patriots Point Links, Rivertowne Country Club
- Mount Pleasant Memorial Waterfront Park
- Coleman Boulevard Revitalization
- Existing and planning for new nature trails
- Fishing tournaments
- Secondary events, such as Athletic tournaments, College of Charleston Athletics Center, Patriots Point events, Wando High School events, Regattas, etc...

#### **PROMOTION**

- Presence in local and regional magazines and visitor guides
- Participation in SCPRT Cooperative Advertising programs
- Charleston CVB advertising of Charleston area to include Mount Pleasant

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Availability of free parking
- Boating community
- Regional Medical Center
- Community recreation facilities and parks
- Easy accessibility through US17, I-26, I-526, Ravenel Bridge
- Bike and walk lanes on Ravenel Bridge
- Easy access to Charleston International Airport
- Mount Pleasant Regional Airport
- 21 hotels

- KOA campground
- Beach support facilities at Isle of Palms

#### SERVICES

- Unique dining that can accommodate large groups; family-friendly and serves as an attraction due to its seafood presentations
- Affordable accommodations (lower ADR than downtown Charleston)
- Movie theatres
- Live theatre
- Unique and variety of shopping to include specialty boutiques, antique stores and trend setting national retailers

#### HOSPITALITY

- Feeling of safety
- Welcoming, small town feel to tourists

## **IV. MOUNT PLEASANT TOURISM CONCERNS**

Based on a tourism discussion among community professionals involved within the lodging, development and tourism industries, the following is a list of weaknesses and concerns relative to Mount Pleasant's growth as a tourist destination.

### **ATTRACTIONS**

- Not as many attractions to promote; need to promote attractions of a more regional scale, than just local
- Eco-tourism and historical tourism not fully utilized
- Not fully capitalizing on local arts community

### **PROMOTION**

- No tourism website
- Advertising is primarily focused on the local market and some regional efforts. Very little advertising nationwide and no international efforts.
- Limited research on the Mount Pleasant visitor.
- Information on Mount Pleasant is limited
- Although boat and kayak tours exists, the tour industry is not fully utilized
- No day visitor or business traveler promotions

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- No central location (spread out)
- Perception of a congested road system, signage
- Limited public transportation, pedestrian mobility
- No professional sports or music venue, although the College of Charleston Athletics Complex is located at Patriots Point
- Limited meeting spaces, especially for larger groups

### **SERVICES**

- Hotel staff has limited knowledge of Town and upcoming events
- Limited amount of upscale accommodations
- Limited amount of upscale dining options (ie. Ruth's Chris Steak House)

### **HOSPITALITY**

- Negative outlook on the future
- Perception of not being a visitor town

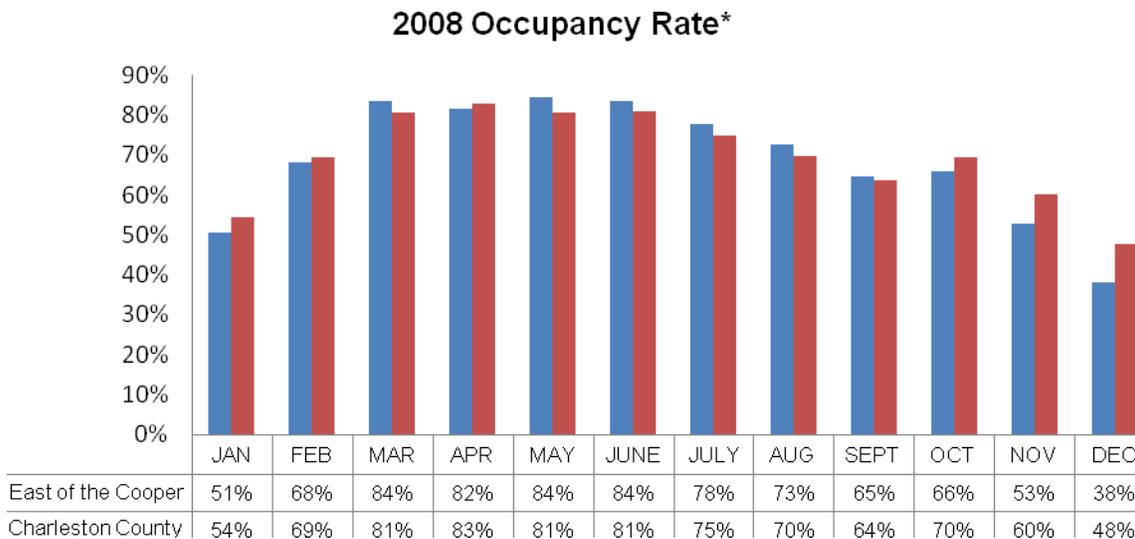
## V. TOURISM MARKET PROFILE

To effectively market Mount Pleasant as a tourist destination, a target market needs to be identified. Based on findings from the South Carolina Tourism Action Plan, below are the characteristics of the South Carolina and Charleston Area traveler which includes preferences on top travel months, lodging choices and preferred top activities. Charleston Area visitors have been further described as being 35-49 years old making at least \$60,000 a year. Repeat visitors, along with business travelers, are market segments that Mount Pleasant could capitalize on with proper implementation. The South Carolina Tourism Action Plan had defined this as a Charleston Area visitor, however more research is needed to confirm this is the target market for Mount Pleasant visitors.

<b>South Carolina Trip Characteristics</b>	<b>Historic Charleston &amp; Resort Beaches Trip Characteristics</b>
<p><b>Top Months for Travel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July (13%)</li> <li>• June (12%)</li> <li>• May (10%)</li> <li>• April (9%)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Top Months for Travel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July (19%)</li> <li>• May (12%)</li> <li>• April (11%)</li> <li>• November (11%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lodging</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotel (32%)</li> <li>• Condo/Time Share (9%)</li> <li>• RV/Camper/Tent (3%)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lodging</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotel (52%)</li> <li>• Condo/Time Share (9%)</li> <li>• RV/Camper/Tent (3%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shopping (33%)</li> <li>• Beach Activities (27%)</li> <li>• Outdoor (7%)</li> <li>• Rural sightseeing (6%)</li> <li>• Golf (6%)</li> <li>• City/Urban sightseeing (6%)</li> <li>• Historic places, sites, museums (6%)</li> <li>• Zoo/Aquarium/Science museum (6%)</li> <li>• Nightlife/Dancing (4%)</li> <li>• National/State Park (3%)</li> <li>• Attend sport event (3%)</li> <li>• Water sports/boating (3%)</li> <li>• Performing Arts (3%)</li> <li>• Cultural Events/Festival (1%)</li> <li>• Art museums/galleries (1%)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shopping (38%)</li> <li>• Historic places, sites, museums (29%)</li> <li>• City/Urban sightseeing (28%)</li> <li>• Beach activities (19%)</li> <li>• Rural sightseeing (8%)</li> <li>• Zoo/Aquarium/Science museum (8%)</li> <li>• National/State Parks (6%)</li> <li>• Outdoor (6%)</li> <li>• Nightlife/Dancing (3%)</li> <li>• Golf (3%)</li> <li>• Art museums/Galleries (3%)</li> <li>• Water Sports/boating (3%)</li> <li>• Performing Arts (2%)</li> <li>• Attend sport event (2%)</li> <li>• Cultural Events/Festivals (2%)</li> </ul>

<b>Median Household Income:</b> \$55,000 - \$59,999	<b>Median Household Income:</b> \$60,000 - \$89,999
--	--

Although summer months are popular for travel, especially for a coastal city, off-peak months still see high visitation. With the various community festivals and events spread out through the year, each month there is a reason to visit. The following chart represents the hotel occupancy rates for East of the Cooper and Charleston County from January to December 2008. Occupancy rates were down 8% in 2008, as compared to 2007. Yet, average daily rate (A.D.R.) increased 3.2% to \$111.05.



\*Source: Charleston Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

March through August are the top occupancy months for East of the Cooper, which is similar to the reports in the South Carolina Tourism Action Plan. April is a busy month with events such as the Mount Pleasant Blessing of the Fleet festival and the Family Circle Cup held annually. Occupancy rates for other areas of the Charleston County including Peninsula Area, West of the Ashley, and North Charleston are included in Appendix A.1.

The top origin of visitors to the Charleston area are South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, New York, Virginia, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Massachusetts based on the SC Tourism Action Report.

The Town of Mount Pleasant website features a section to request a visitor information packet. For 2008, over 112,000 hits were noted on the Visitor Center sections of the website, while 311 requests were submitted for a Mount Pleasant Tourism packet. 62% of these respondents listed their email address as a means of contact, while 33% listed their phone number. South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Ohio, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Jersey and Virginia the top ten states that requested information in 2008 from the website. No requests were made from Nevada, Oregon, Vermont, Utah, Wyoming and Iowa. Six international requests, most from Canada were noted as well as from Belgium,

Brazil and the Netherlands. Top categories of interest were attractions, dining, seasonal events, beach and shopping. Appendix A.2 lists all visitor information request statistics.

It is important to note that the Charleston Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau website also serves as a primary source of information for visitors seeking information on Mount Pleasant.

## VI. TOURISM GOALS & OBJECTIVES

After reviewing South Carolina, Charleston Area and Mount Pleasant tourism characteristics, the following goals have been created to assist with the enhancement of tourism in Mount Pleasant. They are broken down based on the five components: attractions, promotion, infrastructure, services, and hospitality.

**To accomplish a majority of the goals listed, the following is recommended as a top priority action.**

- Enlist the services of a qualified business to develop a strategic marketing plan for Mount Pleasant. As an end product, a complete promotional package implementing this marketing plan that includes print materials and website.

### **ATTRACTIONS**

**Goal:** To improve tourism attractions.

**Objective:** To increase attendance and exposure of current attractions.

**Concern:** Mount Pleasant has a number of attractions that can be further enhanced and promoted.

**Action:** Take a look at the current attractions and find ways to encourage attendance. This will also include local festivals and events.

**Goal:** To improve tourism attractions.

**Objective:** To determine what major new attraction should be pursued by the community.

**Concern:** Mount Pleasant is competing with surrounding areas for tourist attention and should consider bringing a new attraction to the town.

**Short –term Action:** The Memorial Waterfront Park, opening in July 2009, will become a new attraction to promote on many levels. This will include the new War Memorial, Visitors Center, Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Pavilion and pier. The park will be able to accommodate large festivals, such as the Blessing of the Fleet and Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival, as well as dances on the pier (ie. shaggin' on the pier). The green space, water access, and proximity to the Ravenel bridge can also accommodate the eco-tourism niche.

**Long-term Action:** Review possible options of a museum, sports arena, performing arts center or music venue. A convention center similar to the North Charleston Convention Center is ideal since it is equipped to accommodate large meeting groups, musical and theatre entertainment. This addition would benefit the community as well as increase tourism. Additional benefits of a convention center include attraction for the development of more hotels and restaurants.

**Goal:** To improve tourism attractions.

**Objective:** To develop more walking trails & parks in Mount Pleasant.

**Concern:** Nature, heritage and activity products are identified in market research as in growing demand by today's tourists.

**Action:** Enlist the planning department to determine what areas of Mount Pleasant can accommodate this growth in eco-tourism. Coordination with the Francis Marion

National Forest would be beneficial. The Memorial Waterfront Park will help fulfill the desire for more nature, heritage and activity products.

**Goal:** To improve tourism attractions.

**Objective:** To develop a historical tourism trail.

**Concern:** Historical elements of Mount Pleasant have not been capitalized on as a major attraction to the area.

**Action:** Review the list of 50 historical markers within Mount Pleasant and create a "Historical Marker Trail" to possibly include the opportunity for a self-guided tour. Include these listings on the website. Mount Pleasant needs to capitalize on its position as a stop of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

## **PROMOTION**

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** To establish a strategic marketing plan for Mount Pleasant

**Concern:** Create a strategic marketing plan for Mount Pleasant to help sell it as not only a tourist destination, but a relocation option for residents & businesses.

**Action:** Enlist the services of a qualified company to develop a strategic marketing plan for Mount Pleasant. This plan will be developed using a combination of research, strategy and creativity. Based on the results, the Town will have a unique marketing plan that will appeal to the appropriate markets segments to include residents, visitors, and economic development influencers.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** To establish a separate Tourism website from the Town of Mount Pleasant website.

**Concern:** The Town's website is geared towards residents and is not user-friendly for potential visitors.

**Action:** Create a website that is user-friendly, inviting and details the following items: attractions, dining & nightlife, events, shopping, beaches, golf, cultural events, outdoor activities, historical trails and more. The ability to have videos and articles on Mount Pleasant for visitors to view before their visit is also important. Other needs include resident relocation information and up-to-date economic development statistics. Having a unique url address separate from the Town website, enables more efficient means of measuring effectiveness. The Town's tourism website should be operating in 2009 and should encompass the elements of the strategic marketing initiative developed for Mount Pleasant.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Enlist the services of an advertising agency to put together complete promotional package based on the results of the strategic marketing initiative.

**Concern:** All promotional materials should be up-to-date and provide a consistent message about Mount Pleasant as a premier tourist destination.

**Action:** Create a promotional package that captures the essence of Mount Pleasant. It will include information on attractions, accommodations, dining, shopping, calendar of events and feature a variety of pictures of Mount Pleasant. Similar to the website, it could also include information for resident or business relocation, depending on the target audience. An option is to create a high-quality, glossy

magazine that encompasses all these components. The Town currently has a brochure and accommodations rack card that was redesigned and printed in May 2008. These brochures & rack cards are made available to all South Carolina Welcome Centers, Mount Pleasant Visitor Center, and all tourism information packets. They are also made available upon request. It is important to maintain up-to-date information in all promotional pieces, therefore annual printing is suggested.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** To provide additional methods of disseminating tourism information.

**Concern:** The Town has limited amount of information available electronically.

**Action:** Create a Town brochure or catalog that can be downloaded off the website. Allow interested parties to sign up for e-newsletters that can be distributed monthly or seasonally showcasing events and other information on Mount Pleasant. Currently 65% of visitor information packet requests submit their email address, confirming the trend that people like receiving information electronically as well as in the mail.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Strengthen arts community.

**Concern:** There is limited promotion provided by the Town on the local arts community.

**Action:** Encourage the promotion and support of the local arts community. Strengthen relationship with the Mount Pleasant Artist Guild, local art galleries, Village Repertory Company, and other similar agencies. Encourage the development of local art festivals / gallery walks. Initiate programs to allow local art to be displayed around Town, especially on Coleman Boulevard and the Memorial Waterfront Park.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Continue current advertising plan, while increasing online promotions.

**Concern:** The Town's past advertising campaigns have focused on local print media which does not always capture the visitor before they make their travel arrangements.

**Action:** The primary goal with advertising is to compel a potential visitor to stay in Mount Pleasant and spend their time shopping, dining and visiting area attractions. The current advertising has been efficient in supplying information on Town events such as local festivals, but does not focus on the primary goal: stay in Mount Pleasant. Based on the data discovered through the strategic marketing initiative, the Town will be able to specifically target the appropriate consumer. In the interim, the Town should continue to advertise with the following publications: Charleston Gateway, Where Magazine, Official Charleston Visitors Guide, AAA Go magazine, AAA World Magazine, Southern Living, Smiles, Southeast Coast Film Guide, Moultrie News and Post and Courier. Cooperative advertising is also done yearly with the SCPRT which includes three print media ads as well as online advertising on [www.discoversouthcarolina.com](http://www.discoversouthcarolina.com), the official South Carolina Tourism website. Additional advertising will be considered as the budget allows.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Have promotions geared towards day visitors.

**Concern:** No significant effort in encouraging day visits to Mount Pleasant.

**Action:** Look at promoting in areas such as Hilton Head, Myrtle Beach, Beaufort, Daniel Island and Isle of Palms, to encourage day trips for shopping, dining or attending festivals. Promote the convenience of Highway 17 or the "tourism highway."

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Update Town stock photography and video.

**Concern:** The Town has outdated photography and video footage.

**Action:** Enlist the help of a professional photographer and filmmaker to capture new images of Mount Pleasant scenes, attractions and festivals.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Strengthen partnership with Charleston Convention & Visitors Bureau through co-op advertising opportunities.

**Concern:** Mount Pleasant should complement, not compete with its position in the Charleston Area.

**Action:** The Charleston CVB is charged with the task of promoting the entire area of Charleston. Since their advertising budget is larger, the Town should consider doing more co-op ads with the CVB to save money while reaching a larger target audience. In addition, the Town should continue running a one-page ad in the Official Charleston Visitors Guide produced by the Charleston CVB annually. Since accommodations tax is a vital revenue source for Mount Pleasant, it is important to target the visitor before they make travel arrangements. This also addresses a recommendation for the South Carolina Action Plan that comments of the fragmented relationship among tourism agencies. Strengthening Mount Pleasant's position with the Charleston CVB will further strengthen its relationship with SCPRT.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Strengthen partnership with Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum.

**Concern:** Mount Pleasant should do more to attract visitors to one of the largest attractions in the State.

**Action:** The Town is fortunate to have an historic attraction that brings in over 200,000 visitors a year. It is proposed to develop a stronger relationship among the personnel at Patriots Point to work in cross promoting the Town as well as the many features of Patriots Point including but not limited to the USS Yorktown and Congressional Medal of Honor Museum.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Strengthen partnership with Boone Hall Plantation

**Concern:** Mount Pleasant should do more to attract visitors to one of the largest attractions in the Charleston Area.

**Action:** The Town is fortunate to have an historic attraction that brings in a significant amount of visitors each year, as well as the host location for many festivals. It is proposed to develop a stronger relationship and encourage attendance to Boone Hall Plantation.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Create Mount Pleasant Dining Guide.

**Concern:** Although it is the second most requested category, there is no guide available online or in print that features all dining options in Mount Pleasant.

**Action:** With 77% of all visitor information requests seeking information on dining, the Town should have a guide to satisfy this need. Work with local restaurants on providing a guide to tourists that is unique. This guide will be available on new Town tourism website.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Update Town folded map and tear-off map.

**Concern:** Current Town maps are outdated.

**Action:** Work with The City Map project in the development of a new Town folded map and a tear-off map. The folded map will be available at Town Hall facilities and the Visitor Center as well at any local businesses that participate in the advertising program. The tear-off map will be at the Mount Pleasant Visitor Center and be sent in tourism packets.

**Update:** Completed September 2008

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** Update brochure inventory for in-house tourism packets.

**Concern:** Brochure inventory does not include all Mount Pleasant offerings.

**Action:** All leads from advertising are forwarded to the Charleston CVB for fulfillment. However, requests for visitor information can be made on the Town website. These leads are currently fulfilled in-house. Since the brochure inventory is limited and partially out-of-date, it is important to remedy this in order to provide the most accurate and thorough mail piece.

**Goal:** To improve tourism promotion.

**Objective:** To create a name for the area around Patriots Point, Ravenel Bridge and Memorial Waterfront Park.

**Concern:** Having a unique name for this area will assist with promoting it to tourists and the surrounding communities.

**Action:** Create a catchy name for the area near Patriots Point & Memorial Waterfront Park to encourage development and visitation. It will help promote a festival type atmosphere.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Goal:** To improve tourism infrastructure.

**Objective:** To access pedestrian mobility.

**Concern:** Need to improve sidewalks and biking lanes.

**Action:** Pedestrian mobility is important in certain high-traffic areas of Town to include the upcoming Waterfront Park, Wingo Way, Patriots Point and Coleman Boulevard. Biking lines could be improved along these areas.

**Goal:** To improve tourism infrastructure.

**Objective:** To complete Coleman Boulevard Revitalization Plan.

**Concern:** Continue progress of implementing and promoting Coleman Boulevard Revitalization plan.

**Action:** Encourage and promote development of the Town's "main street" as listed in the Coleman Boulevard Revitalization Plan. This will help with pedestrian mobility, as visitors and residents will be encouraged to walk along Coleman Boulevard.

## **SERVICES**

**Goal:** To improve tourism services.

**Objective:** To encourage the development of full service accommodations.

**Concern:** Mount Pleasant is limited in the number of full service accommodation offerings.

**Action:** Look into creating more full service accommodations that will not only target business travelers, but more affluent tourists. This will establish more competition between downtown Charleston and Mount Pleasant.

**Goal:** To improve tourism services.

**Objective:** To encourage the development of upscale restaurants.

**Concern:** Mount Pleasant is limited in the number of upscale restaurants.

**Action:** Look into creating more upscale restaurants that will not only target business travelers, but more affluent tourists. This will create more competition between downtown Charleston and Mount Pleasant.

## **HOSPITALITY**

**Goal:** To improve tourism hospitality.

**Objective:** To encourage businesses to use hospitality-training programs.

**Concern:** Hospitality members not being familiar with Mount Pleasant offerings, including calendar of events.

**Action:** Coordinate with local service managers on training options for all employees; could include coordination with Charleston CVB and College of Charleston Tourism Department.

**Goal:** To improve tourism hospitality.

**Objective:** To stay current on tourism research and available ways to improve tourism in Mount Pleasant.

**Concern:** Lack of research or effort will cause Mount Pleasant to lose a competitive edge among surrounding communities.

**Action:** Consistently maintain research and continue training on tourism development. Will need assistance and research materials from the Charleston CVB, College of Charleston Tourism Department and Chamber of Commerce.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

The Town of Mount Pleasant has the opportunity to increase tax revenues, while positioning itself as a premier tourist destination. Although the economy has proven to be a challenge, it is important to maintain consistent promotion while enhancing tourism offerings. This plan listed current limitations in attractions, promotion, infrastructure, service and hospitality. By taking no action, the Town risks the chance of losing its competitive position and considerable revenue. However, by examining ways to implement the goals set forth in the Mount Pleasant Tourism Action Plan, the Town can continue developing within the industry.

Charleston will continue to see a significant amount of visitors annually. However, the goal of the Town is to capture those same visitors, and get them to stay in Mount Pleasant. Mount Pleasant's proximity to Charleston is an asset that most cities do not capitalize on, but the aforementioned goals will put Mount Pleasant on a visitors showcase.

In order to effectively compete in this industry, the Town must promote a unique image to its consumers. Creating a strategic marketing plan that can appeal to visitors, and even potential residents and economic development influences, will be the necessary tool. Once this plan has been established, the Town can take a position to implement the goals as laid out in this plan.