

Gadsden County Tourist Development Council



Strategic Visioning Sessions

April 21, 2014
July 28, 2014

Sessions facilitated by:
Lynn Cherry
Carpe Diem Community Solutions

Seize the day

by



Gadsden County Tourist Development Council Visioning Sessions

In preparation of the update to the Gadsden County Strategic Plan, the Tourist Development Council (TDC) held two visioning sessions to lay out the framework and identify the components of the revised Plan. Lynn Cherry of Carpe Diem Community Solutions facilitated both meetings. Lynn is an experienced facilitator and community involvement expert who has worked with many organizations including governmental agencies and non-profits.

The first of the two visioning sessions included a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis to build group consensus in identifying where the TDC can concentrate in forming success stories, and where improvement can be made with the opportunities in and around Gadsden County. This activity helped the members examine their own perceptions of the functionality of the TDC, as well as hearing other's views.

The TDC conducted the second of two visioning sessions on July 28, 2014. The second portion of this document reports the outputs from the second session. The original results of the SWOT analysis were included the July 28, 2014 visioning session to show a background of previous progress. Council members were asked to participate in several activities to create images of success for the TDC. These ideas of success were then honed in on to create specific scenarios of what success means to the TDC. The last four pages of this document represent that activity.

Staff, including Allara Mills Gutcher and Sonya Burns, also participated in the visioning sessions.

Tourist Development Council
Visioning Session, part I
April 21, 2014
Lynn Cherry, facilitator
Carpe Diem Community Solutions

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis Report Out

Note: although these items are numbered, please do not consider that as a priority list. These items are numbered to assist in discussion and reference at a future point.

STRENGTHS – Interior influences

1. Great checks and balances system (guidelines)
2. Surplus in funds
3. Budget balances/is balanced
4. Great diversity in the backgrounds of the board members (business/experiences/geographical)
5. Board members are committed to the development of tourism
6. Board members are knowledgeable

Resources/Capacity:

7. Staff is a great asset
8. Residents of Gadsden County are a great resource
9. Local talent
10. The TDC is financially supportive to others
11. There is great public confidence

Past/Ongoing:

12. The Board of County Commissioners supports and trusts the TDC

Partnerships/Stakeholders

13. The Gadsden Arts Center (planning and collaboration)

WEAKNESSES – Interior influences

1. Other's perception of the lack of tourists within Gadsden County
2. Dollars spent are unequal within the County (geographically)
3. The application for monies is complicated.
4. Education and marketing of the TDC to others needs improvement/Public awareness of the TDC functions.
5. Applicants need to be vetted prior to presentation to the TDC
6. There are loopholes in the Strategic Plan

7. The 150 mile requirement for advertising may be too far.
8. TDC Board getting “into the weeds” during public meetings.
9. Diversity of Gadsden County (understanding the industry of the community)
10. Trust and respect/communication issues
11. Consistency when board members come on as new members/better training and orientation regarding legalities and Strategic Plan.
12. Lack of patience of the TDC from the BOCC.
13. Long term planning does not exist.
14. Need to focus on the longer-term assets (e.g. eco-tourism/agri-tourism)
15. Balance the proactive vs. the reactive issues.
16. Requirement of BOCC approval sometimes shuts down process.
17. Functionality.
18. BOCC not adequately prepared with background of issues when presented from the TDC/lack of communication between TDC and BOCC.

These weaknesses are opportunities for improvement!

OPPORTUNITIES – exterior influences

1. Gadsden County’s cultural diversity
2. Funding/resources available
3. Recreational activities (e.g. fishing and hiking) inside county.
4. Natural beauty of area.
5. Historical resources (architecture)
6. Business opportunities.
7. Good, friendly local people/genuine
8. Retirees/others available to assist as volunteers or become stakeholders.
9. Local talent
10. Proximity to Tallahassee
11. Tourism
12. Multicultural events (e.g. Jazzfest type of concert)
13. Leverage the Visit Florida brand/good connection
14. FSU football games
15. Social media
16. Close proximity of FSU/FAMU interns to help the TDC.
17. Summer youth program
18. Stakeholder partnerships
19. Riverway South (familiarization tours)
20. Chamber of Commerce
21. Agri-tourism
22. Creek Entertainment (poker room – survey participants to see where they come from - how long they stay – if they bring families)
23. Dinner cruise!

*Become the driver of the TDC! Don't be so reactive, be proactive driving the mission of the TDC.
Create a signature event, create community ownership.*

THREATS – exterior influences

1. Culture and racial issues
2. Strategic Plan without goals – too complicated – strategies conflict
3. Local criticism
4. Competition
5. Lack of marketing assets
6. Perception and genuine lack of cohesion at the county level
7. County boards do not work together
8. Lack of teamwork
9. Tallahassee – what they offer. People stay there instead of Gadsden.

HOMEWORK:

- 1. Think about how to implement the SWOT analysis.**
- 2. Focus on three opportunities to move forward, start with the home run!**
- 3. Frame out the three opportunities.**

Tourist Development Council
Visioning Session, part II
July 28, 2014
Lynn Cherry, facilitator
Carpe Diem Community Solutions

As a recap from the TDC initial visioning session held on April 21, 2014, the members present were asked to choose one item from the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) that was of highest importance. These include:

- Eliminating the inconsistencies in the Strategic Plan such as separating the grants funding from the marketing funding categories.
- Be more proactive as a TDC.
- Explore and pursue opportunities to tie-in financially to other agencies and events.
- Need for long-term traction in one direction.
- Need for more revenue to grow the budget.
- Primarily focus on aggressive growth.
- Find more effective means of communication with the hotel owners/managers. Network more.
- More assistance to the hotels.
- Market the Tourist Development Council.

After this exercise, the TDC members were asked to identify what success looks like. In five years, what did a successful TDC accomplish, and how did it get there?

- Market the natural resources and the cultural diversity
- Had the ability to stick to a plan and stay on target.
 - Appoint a leader.
 - Understand the Plan.
 - The Plan must be clear.
 - Install checkpoints to make sure the Plan works.
- Identify what the TDC can build off of (strengths)
- Identify what can be brought to the forefront that we don't have.
- The business community will know we have a tourism base, which is a larger part of the Gadsden County economy.
- We will be able to see what we created.
- Continuous outreach.

Subsequently, the TDC members were asked to identify components of a successful Strategic Plan. These components will be used to assist in the amendment and update of the current Strategic Plan.

Components of the Plan

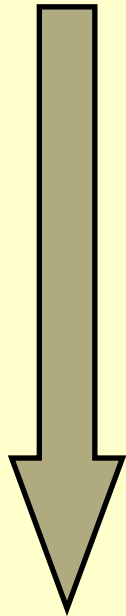
- Multi-year timeline and calendar
- Method to insure involvement with citizens, tourist industry. Engage members
- Get new TDC members up to speed.
- Better education/training in place
- Look for future growth
- Understand legal spending of tax dollars
- Need grant, marketing and infrastructure as detailed components of plan
- Make it simple: “1 – 2 – 3”
- Must have clarity and certainty
- Must have a monitoring and evaluation process
- Needs a community “check-in” component: open dialogue
- Define leadership
- Checkpoint for visitors
 - At hotels or online
 - Comment cards
 - Simple to fill out and submit
- Collaborate for funding with other boards and commissions
- Leadership to create collaboration

Following are several diagrams which resulted in an exercise the participants worked through to help identify and define success. Each page represents an idea of success. Each indicator of the measurement of that success (shown at the arrow) was contributed by a separate council member.

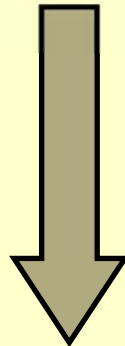
What success will look like in five years

HISTORIC TOWN WITH A WESTERN THEME

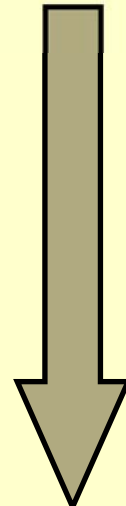
How we get there



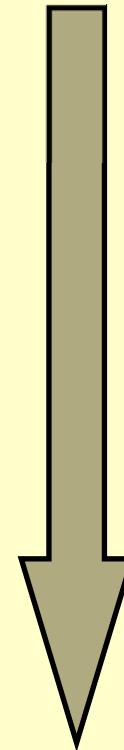
*Facilities
in Place*



*Marketing and
Infrastructure*



Inclusive

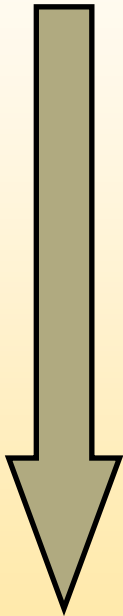


Marketing

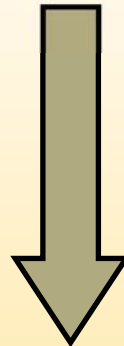
What success will look like in five years

Restructure TDC to Engage More People

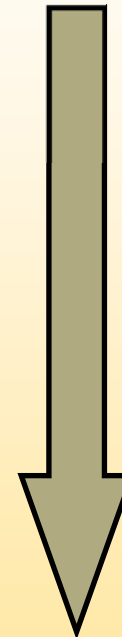
How we get there



*Increase
Participation*



*Monitor and
Evaluate
Success of Plan*

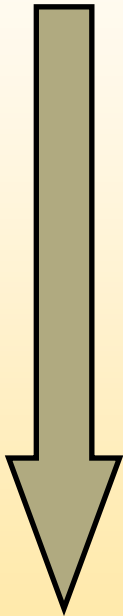


*Simple Plan
“1—2—3”*

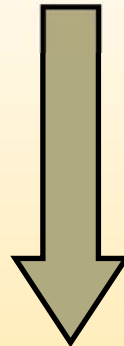
What success will look like in five years

Ecotourism With Strong Foundation—Rapidly Growing

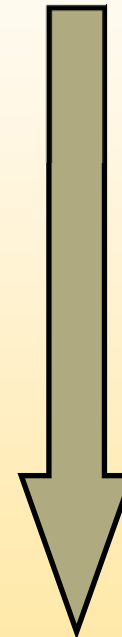
How we get there



*Walking/
Hiking Trails*



*Fishing
Tournaments*

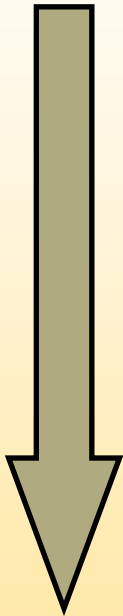


*Boating
Activities*

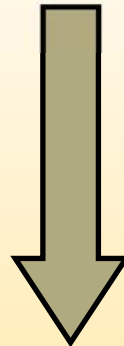
What success will look like in five years

Building New Hotels and Restaurants

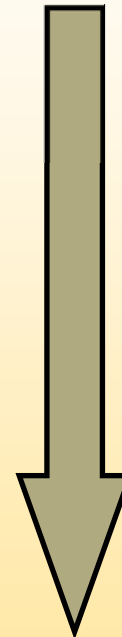
How we get there



More Visitors



*Business Plan to
Stay Connected
With Businesses*



*New
Employment*