The following is a current assessment of tourism resources and a strategic vision for the future. With the development of the Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility it is expected Hart County and the Historic city of Hartwell will benefit from the direct, indirect and induced economic impact of increased tourism. This economic engine is hoped to provide the basis for further development of tourism infrastructure and related tourism activities and events to promote the rural qualities of Hartwell. By abiding by the goals of sustainable development and Geotourism, Hartwell can differentiate itself from similar locations and emphasize its unique natural resources, rich history and abundant activities which include: Lake Hartwell, Historic Downtown Hartwell, and Cateechee Golf Resort.
Executive Summary

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Although this plan does not provide specific conditions to address environmental, economic and social sustainability it provides a foundation of knowledge to direct development efforts. It is imperative to secure public support throughout the process so the stakeholders (local residents, business owners, developers, county and city officials, tourists) are assured that a level of consensus was reached and tourism development reflects their goals and ideals of success.

So not to influence a strategic vision of tourism or the development strategies in Hart County and the City of Hartwell with my words, I have summarized local stakeholder statements collected from Archway Partnership facilitated public meetings regarding tourism in Hartwell (See Appendix A):

Tourism is the industry of travel and involves people visiting our town for relaxing, fun, leisure, and learning. We need to support and promote tourism because it helps to create jobs and brings in folks who do not live here, yet spend money which generates an economic impact. Our vision of success would include enhanced services and more amenities like hotels, restaurants, and a variety of businesses. Expanded tourism should increase profitability, generate more tax revenue and lower our property taxes. Our strengths include available land, Lake Hartwell, historic downtown, Cateechee Golf Club, and a rural setting as well as a commitment to leadership, and a diverse and friendly community with a hometown atmosphere and sense of place. We also recognize our weaknesses and they include our lack of tourism investment, lack of vision or long range plans, lack of staff, funding, and expertise. We could improve our position with greater financial investments in tourism, a marketing plan, a strategic long term vision, proper training in the hospitality industry, and adding more hotels and amenities. Benefits of this commitment could include lower taxes, more activities for youth, a diverse economic base, better educated work force, more amenities and infrastructure, more entertainment and enhanced services, a ripple effect on the local economy, cultural awareness and pride in our town so that people want to visit Hartwell and residents want to stay in Hartwell. With this in mind we realize there will be impacts from this success and includes losing our small town appeal, increased traffic, crime, and demand on services. We also recognize a broadened ecological footprint from rapid development and increased visitation could adversely affect our town, its residents, and future tourism development. To take action our first order of business should be to identify and hire a professional staff and secure government buy-in to support our efforts. We also need a long-term strategic vision of tourism and a central organization for implementation. And though not considered the most important action item, Hartwell should develop a land use plan and conduct feasibility and impact studies prior to any development in the tourism sector.
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Appendices
OVERVIEW

Go Fish Georgia
The Go Fish Georgia initiative is meant to promote the lake and river resources of Georgia as a major boating and fishing tourism destination to boost economic development throughout communities in the state. Governor Sunny Purdue proposed $19 million for the initiative in 2007/08 budget to be leveraged towards a $30 million Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) project. It is expected that this initiative will result in high quality fisheries, promote family friendly fishing, create recreation access points, and generate an economic catalyst (Appendix B). Additionally, the allocated state funds will go towards the Go Fish Georgia Center, a state-of-the-art educational facility located in Perry, GA which will include fish and wildlife exhibits, theaters, a nature trail, fishing pond and a new state fish hatchery. In line with the DNR “green” building initiative, the entire complex will be “LEED” certified meaning that the Center will be constructed using the newest technologies for energy efficiency and sustainability (Appendix C).

Georgia Bass Trail
The nexus of the Georgia Bass Trail was inherited from neighboring Alabama. The idea is to connect boat ramps throughout the state to allow for greater opportunities for anglers who wish to fish the reservoirs and rivers of Georgia. By connecting 18 launch sites throughout the state, anglers from the state the Georgia, neighboring states, and nationwide will be able to utilize the unique resources and enjoy the world class fisheries of the state. From Lake Hartwell in the northeast, to the Altamaha River in the southeast to West Point Lake on the Alabama border, Georgia will be known as a high-class fishing destination with a wealth of varied and rich natural resources.

Mega Ramps
Ten of the 18 sites on the Georgia Bass Trail will see major changes to their existing infrastructure and have been marked for upgrades or new construction which will include large fishing facilities known as Mega Ramps. Mega ramps differ from standard launch sites where they provide 4-6 large boat ramps to accommodate multiple put-ins simultaneously; offer expanded parking areas (100+ spots), adjacent docks for easy accessibility for anglers, and other amenities (e.g. weigh-in stations) that are primarily constructed to attract large fishing tournaments. There are calls for the construction of 10 mega ramps in the state of Georgia (Appendix D). Similar facilities already exist in GA (Clarks Hill Lake, Lake Sinclair, West Point Lake, and Lake Lanier) and throughout the southeast in Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina; and all have proven to generate an economic value for the surrounding communities.

Lake Hartwell
Lake Hartwell is a man-made lake that was built in 1955 and 1963 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood control, hydropower, recreation, water supply and fish and wildlife management. The lake comprises 942 miles of shoreline and nearly 56,000 acres of water located in Georgia and South Carolina. Currently, Lake Hartwell offers ten ramp facilities in the state of Georgia and fifteen in South Carolina. Two sites on the Georgia portion of Lake Hartwell have been marked for mega ramp construction: Tugaloo State Park in Franklin/Stevens counties and Gum Branch in Hart County.

Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility
Currently, Gum Branch Access offers a small single launch ramp, 20 parking spaces, bathrooms and a courtesy dock. Due to harmful contamination of PCBs into Lake Hartwell from an upstream industry a large financial settlement was finalized in 2006. The funds from this settlement allocated over $850,000 for the construction of the Gum Branch Mega Ramp. Additional Federal funds have been requested to complete the project which will include: 6-8 launching ramps, courtesy docks, parking for 200 vehicles and boat trailers, new restrooms, security lighting, fishing weigh-in station, pedestrian trail, and road widening. The Gum Branch Mega Ramp is expected to attract local, regional and national fishing
tournaments that have the potential to generate $744,000 annually under the Full Operation Scenario (40 one-day event, two one-day national events with one practice day, and one three-day regional event with one practice day (Appendix E)).

Hart County and Historic Downtown Hartwell
Fill in…

OBJECTIVES

Objective One: Hart County and the city of Hartwell hope to utilize the resources of Lake Hartwell, specifically, the construction of a Mega Ramp Facility at Gum Branch, to attract local, regional and national fishing tournaments.

Objective Two: By attracting local, regional and national fishing tournaments to the Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility, Hart County and specifically the city of Hartwell, hope to create an economic engine for regional development from the influx of tourism dollars associated with tournament fishing.

Objective Three: Through increased tourism and economic development associated from fishing tournaments, Hart County and the city of Hartwell can expand their existing tourism opportunities that satisfy the needs of family members who accompany fishing tournament contestants and attract a new form of tourists who wish to experience golf-, rural- and agro-tourism.

MARKET ANALYSIS

Much of the following information is a summary of the findings from The Market Feasibility and Economic Impact of Two Mega Ramps on Lake Hartwell prepared by Caribou International, Inc. in September 2006 (Appendix E).

Fishing Statistics
In 2001, one in six Americans over the age of 16 fished at least one day totally 34 million Americans and fishing was recognized as the sixth most popular sport in the United States in 2005. Average expenditures for fishing per person in 2001 totaled $716/per year which includes licenses, equipment, food, gas, and lodging. Georgia ranks 13th in the nation for the number of anglers in the state and in 2003, Georgia estimated the economic impact from fishing was almost $1.2 billion, supported over 10,000 jobs, and generated $19.7 million in sales and fuel taxes and $15.3 million in state income taxes. Although this data reflects a great deal of spending, Georgian fishermen/women spend a higher percentage of their money in other areas (i.e. traveling to fish outside of Georgia) compared to anglers in other states. That is to say, Georgians leave the state to fish more than anglers in other states.

Fishing Organizations and Tournaments
Bass Anglers Sportsmans Society
Bass Anglers Sportsmans Society (B.A.S.S.) is the world’s largest fishing organization and is owned by ESPN. With over a half a million members, B.A.S.S. has a strong presence on cable television and publishes two magazines, Bassmasters and BASS Times. B.A.S.S. has several professional series which range from 50 to 200 anglers (and up to 50 to 200 co-anglers) and payouts up to one million dollars per event. They also have weekend, women only, and state and local chapter tournaments. These tournaments are negotiated differently depending on the series. For example, division tournaments require a $2000 buy-in, a regional tournament costs the host facility $5000, and an Elite series tournament costs $50,000. Additionally, the host facility is responsible for specific tournament requirements (a
facility to hold at least 400 people within 20-30 minutes from the lake, weigh-in stations, a paved area to accommodate a 50ft x 20ft trailer, large flat areas for tents and trailers), volunteers for traffic control and parking, as well as other resources as needed.

**FLW Outdoors/The Bass Federation**
FLW Outdoors now partners with The Bass Federation and offers national, regional, state and local tournaments for professional and amateur anglers. Events are posted in *FLW Outdoors* magazine, *Kids All-American Fishing* magazine, FLW brochures and the FLW website. Larger events are broadcast on Fox Sports Net and their 10 series’ offer cash prizes of about $37.9 million. In 2006, 101 of its 265 tournaments were held in southeastern lakes. FLW requires the host community to provide support for the tournament which includes a buy-in and some in-kind services. The premier Stern Series tournament costs between $35,000-50,000 for the buy-in, there must be a 100,000sqft convention center within 20 minutes of the ramp, a Wal-Mart within 45 minutes of the ramp and at least 500 hotel rooms within 20-45 minutes of the ramp. In August 2010, the newly constructed Laurel Park Mega Ramp on Lake Lanier will host the Forrest Wood Cup where participants will compete for a $2.5 million purse with weigh-ins at the Georgia Dome and Georgia World Congress Center and has the potential to generate $20+ million. In 2008, this tournament was broadcast to 81 million viewers on Fox Sports in the US and continues to be replayed throughout the world.

**American Bass Anglers**
Specifically designed for the weekend angler, American Bass Anglers (ABA) sponsors over 640 tournaments nationwide with 326 in the Southeast and 19 in Georgia in 2005/06. ABA publishes *The American Bass Anglers Tournament Trail Magazine* and offers point and cash prizes at each tournament.

**Bass Anglers Invitational Trail**
Contained in the Southeast, The Bass Anglers Invitational Trail (B.A.I.T) had 137 tournaments scheduled in 2006 including the one season-ending two-day Classic. This event has never been held in Georgia although there are three divisions and 24 tournaments in the state. Additionally, the Lake Hartwell tournaments are hosted in South Carolina (not Georgia) and saw two division tournaments of 30-125 anglers in 2005/06. Division tournaments are chosen by division directors and championship locations are determined by headquarters.

**Competitive Anglers Tournament Trail**
This nationwide organization with 2000-3000 members is a set of weeknight or Saturday morning tournaments for amateurs. There championship tournaments have 100-150 boats with $5,500-10,000 buy-ins plus some in-kind services. They do however bring an entire staff and there is no need for local volunteers.

**Local Clubs**
There are over 200 local bass clubs in Georgia with most being affiliated with B.A.S.S. or FLW Outdoors/The Bass Federation. Each club typically holds 9-15 one-day tournaments a year at local venues or “getaway” venues within the state or region. Tournament locations can be nominated by members and are chosen by the club president or committees. Due to the proximity, Lake Hartwell offers potential to attract clubs from the neighboring state of South Carolina.

**Tournament Needs and Amenities Desired**
There are many similarities with each ramp visited, but the following are necessary to attract national, regional and local fishing tournaments:

- An adequate supply of appropriate sized fish year-round
- The ability to launch three or more boats simultaneously and ramps usable lowest lake levels
- There must be adequate level parking (paved, gravel or grass) for up to 150 trucks and trailers
• There must be good lighting at the ramp and parking area
• There should be a dock to accommodate 10-50 boats for anglers and/or co-anglers to access the boat after the car is parked
• Ramps need to be in a centralized location on the lake
• A large flat area (~100ft x 100ft) for weigh-in trailers and tents
• A convenience store either en-route to the ramp facility or on-site
• Stands for spectators
• Restrooms and security at the facility during tournaments are not required, but appreciated
• Facility should be easily accessible to the interstate
• Distance from accommodations should be a short (20-30 min) and comfortable ride
  o Moderate accommodations ($50-70/night) are most utilized
  o Some will utilize cabins and RV grounds
  o Most tournaments require 10-270 rooms
  o The largest tournaments require up to 500 rooms
  o Accommodations MUST have electrical outlets to charge boat batteries
• There should be reasonably priced restaurants, grocery stores and gas stations which are easily accessible and open early to accommodate participants
• Coupon books for local establishments are considered beneficial
• Local organizers should be easy to work with and accommodating

Non-tournament Uses
Mega Ramp facilities are designed and built primarily to accommodate national, regional and local fishing tournaments. Even under Scenario Two (Appendix E) which encompasses Hart and Franklin counties and accounts for 40 one-day events, two one-day national events with one practice day, and one three-day regional event with one practice day per facility, there are many days where the ramp facilities will go unused. It is suggested to utilize these facilities for other lake and non-water activities which include:
• Water skiing/wake boarding events and tournaments
• Car shows and other outdoor exhibitions
• Holiday celebrations (e.g. Fourth of July Fireworks display)
• Outdoor concerts
• Local farmers markets

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Lake Hartwell
Hart County

Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility, City of Hartwell
Located 3.7 miles from downtown Hartwell, GA off Old Highway 29, Gum Branch Mega Ramp will offer: a) Six launching ramps; b) 214 vehicle and trailer parking spots; c) 45 spectator parking spots; d) a 8’x180’ courtesy dock; e) weigh-in station; f) spectator seating at the weigh-in station; g) group shelter; h) restrooms; i) ample lighting; j) traffic signage. The specifications for the development of the Gum Branch Facility exemplify the requirements necessary to attract national, regional and local fishing tournaments.

Tourism Infrastructure, City of Hartwell
The proximity of the Gum Branch mega ramp facility to the downtown center of Hartwell, GA makes it excellent location to host fishing tournaments and non-tournament related events. Hartwell, GA has potential to provide anglers and tourists with a rewarding experience. As of 2006, Hartwell listed three
national hotels (Best Western (40 rooms), Day Inn (34 rooms), Jameson Inn (40 rooms)), two bed and breakfasts (Shuler Manor (7 rooms) and Skelton House (7 rooms)), 16 vacation home rentals, and cottages (5), trailer sites (78) and tent sites (16) at Hart State Park. Of the 33 listed restaurants listed in Hartwell, ten were national chains and the rest local establishments. Downtown Hartwell also offers a coffee shop, live Bluegrass venue and restaurants (?). Downtown businesses include clothing stores (2), art studio/gallery, art frame store, formal wear store, antique stores (?), and an auto parts store. Located 2.5 miles from downtown Hartwell is the Cateechee Golf Club, an Audubon Signature Course (the first in Georgia) that was recently given a “four star” rating by Golf Digest. The Club offers an 18-hole course, conference facilities, and the Waterfall Grille, an award winning restaurant.

Franklin County
Tugaloo State Park Mega Ramp Facility, City of Lavonia
Fill in…Know your competition

Tourism Infrastructure, City of Lavonia
Fill in…

Georgia
Mega Ramp Facilities
- Laurel Park, Lake Lanier, Hart County
- Richard B. Russell State Park, Richard B. Russell Lake, Elbert County
- Wildwood Park, Clarks Hill Lake, Columbia County
- Robert Baurle Ramp, Savannah River, Richmond County
- Jaycee Landing, Altamaha River, Wayne County
- Earle May Boat Basin Park, Lake Seminole, Decatur County
- Pyne Road Park, West Point Lake, Troup County

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

Economic Impact of Tourism in Georgia
According to the Travel Industry Association of America 2007 Economic Impact Report, State of Georgia (Appendix F), total domestic and international travelers directly spent $20.2 billion in Georgia in 2007, up 5.8% from 2006. This is a direct impact and refers to “new” money flow into a region as a result of export of goods and services. Additional economic impacts from tourism include an indirect impact or money that flows into a region which is used to purchase materials and/or labor. Georgia accumulated nearly $5.9 billion in indirect spending from tourism. Finally, induced economic impact refers to spending decisions made by employees where they spend their money locally or outside the region. Georgia saw almost $8 billion in induced expenditures in 2007. Total expenditures by domestic and international travelers in the state of Georgia in 2007 reached $34.1 billion thanks to the multiplier effect.

Tourism Multipliers and Leakage
As an area develops into a tourism destination the local economy benefits. This is due to the creation of new jobs to accommodate visitors and from the direct impact of spending by those visitors to that destination. This influx of tourism dollars is then used by local establishments to purchase materials and/or labor necessary for tourism operations, and spent again by employees to purchase necessary items for day-to-day life. This is known as a multiplier effect. The multiplier represents the number of times that the direct economic activity is re-circulated through the regional economy.

Georgia estimates that every one ($1) dollar spent on tourism creates eight ($8) additional dollars for the economy. Normal tourism expenditures include: lodging, food, transportation (fuel, public transit, etc),
entertainment, incidental spending, and travel-generated tax receipts. As numbers of tourist grow, and the local economy benefits from direct, indirect and induced economic impact, it is important to reinvest as much of the tourism dollars as possible in the local economy. In some cases as much as 70% of tourism dollars spent in a local region does not remain in the local economy. This is known as leakage.

**Leakage** of tourism dollars refers to the amount of spending that is not available for reinvestment in the local economy. This can happen when items used in tourism operations are imported from outside the region, greater profits are generated by (inter)national as opposed to local establishments, or spending by employees is primarily done outside the local community. A viable way to address leakage in a growing community is to ensure tourism related businesses are locally owned and operated.

**Sustainable Development**

The most appropriate definition of Sustainable Development is: Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of further generations to meet their own needs. In terms of sustainable tourism, it is “leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biodiversity, and life support systems” (UNWTO). Simply put: Action today with a vision for the future.

When addressing tourism development in Hart County and the City of Hartwell, it is vital to address Environmental, Economical, and Socio-cultural issues to attain sustainability. Planners and developers should constantly have a “view of the future” prior to any impact caused by tourism development. Indeed, impacts are unavoidable so it is important to plan within a framework of consensus of local stakeholders. It is suggested tourism developers and local stakeholders plan within the “limits of acceptable change” framework (Appendix G). This model allows the recognition of conflicting goals, determines a hierarchy of goals, how each goal constrains the other, to what level each goal will be compromised, and determines the limit of acceptable change for each goal. If properly planned and executed, this framework for development can address impacts that may adversely affect sustainability.

**STRATEGIC VISION**

While working towards a short-term and long-term strategic vision statement regarding the development of tourism in Hart County and the City of Hartwell, have we asked ourselves the following questions (for a list of response regarding “success in tourism” see Appendix A):

- What do we stand for?
- What do we have?
- What do we want?
- What can we be best at?

**Short-term**

Fill in…

**Long-term**

Fill in…
STRENGTH, WEAKNESS, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

Strengths
- Lake Hartwell
  - Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility
  - Hart State Park
- Historic Downtown District
- Cateechee Golf Club

Weaknesses
- Lack of Tourism/Marketing Director
- Lack of strategic vision and marketing plan
- Lack of marketing materials
- Limited exposure of town and resources outside of the region
- Limited tourism infrastructure
- Limited tourism activities or special events

Opportunities
- To attract national, regional and local fishing tournaments to the Gum Branch Facility to generate economic impact from tourism
- To revitalize the historic downtown district with an emphasis on locally owned and operated establishments
- To develop tourism activities and special events to attract visitors
- To emphasize Lake Hartwell, historic downtown and Cateechee Golf Club

Threats
- Negative impacts from tourism development and increased visitation
- Limited tourism infrastructure compared to similar destinations
- Tugaloo State Park Mega Ramp Facility
- City of Lavonia
- Other mega ramp facilities in Georgia
- Competition with similar rural towns investing in tourism development

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

Although the State of Georgia is investing in several mega ramp facilities throughout the state, they will all be very similar. If the facilities are built and the fishing is good, tournaments will use Gum Branch Mega Ramp. Of greatest importance to the City of Hartwell and Hart County will be to differentiate itself from the rest of the mega ramp facilities.

Three major factors that may assist in this differentiation are:
- the vicinity of the ramp to downtown
- a sense of community in downtown district
- wide variety of tourism related activities for tournament participants and their families
DIFFERENTIAL ADVANTAGE

With the development of the Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility the city of Hartwell can expect an increase in visitors to the region due to its close proximity. Although Lake Hartwell acts as the centerpiece to tourism for Hartwell and the new mega ramp will be responsible for increased tourists, the city of Hartwell, through a great deal of time and effort, can be known for more than just a lake and a ramp.

Historic downtown Hartwell offers an excellent opportunity to attract visitors to what is recognized as “Vanishing Georgia.” With a rich history and heritage, Historic Hartwell offers a brief step back in time. By emphasizing the Historic Hartwell district via tourism-related activities, the area can maintain a small town feel that has proven a successful tool in other tourism communities. Currently, infrastructure is not suitable for a full reliance on the historical aspects of Hartwell so it is suggested that greater emphasis is placed here (See Appendix A). Additionally, an expansion of agrotourism would promote the rural lifestyle of Hart County and provide many folks with a supplement to agricultural related incomes.

Cateechee Golf Club is an Audubon Signature Golf Course and is the first in the state of Georgia. This special recognition reflects the designer’s vision of blending the course with its natural surroundings allowing for ample wildlife habitat and a sense of seclusion. Additionally, the Club offers conference facilities and fine and casual dining opportunities. This special place is a hidden jewel in the hills of northeast Georgia and its special qualities can help to attract golf tourists, conferences and families of those who visit the facilities who take part in a round of golf or utilize the expanding tourism resources of Hartwell.

Indeed, national and regional fishing tournaments, historic tourism, agrotourism, and golf tourism will benefit the city and county and this provides an excellent opportunity for community members to become active in the revitalization of their downtown. This will be appreciated by visitors to Hartwell. The National Geographic has developed the term Geotourism or “tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.” A recent study by National Geographic and the Travel Industry Association of America states there are 134 million “travelers” in the United States of America and 55.1 million of them can be classified as “sustainable tourist” or “Geotourists” (Appendix H). It is suggested that the terms of the Geotourism Charter (Appendix I) be adhered to in future tourism development.

Currently, there are limited tourism related activities, tours or special events in the city of Hartwell or on Lake Hartwell. It is expected that time and preparation is necessary for the development of these resources but some general suggestions to further differentiate Hartwell could include:

- Community owned and operated establishments
  - Jet-ski rentals
  - Bed & Breakfasts
  - Boutique hotels
  - Roadside motels
  - Downtown restaurants (home cooking, ice cream shop)
  - Downtown stores (bookstores, galleries)
  - Bait and tackle shops (as needed)

- Development of Agrotourism activities
  - Tours of organic farms with activities
  - Tours of dairy farms with activities
  - Corn Mazes and hay rides in the fall season
  - “Haunted Barn Tours” during the Halloween season
• Expansion of Historic Hartwell resources
  o Production of historical catalogue that helped to define Hartwell
  o Downtown Hartwell Walking tour
  o Historic Driving tour
  o Historic markers and plaques tour
  o Cemeteries tour
  o National Register of Historic Places tour
  o African American History tour
  o Podcast downloads from a centralized tourism website

• Expansion of special events downtown
  o Seasonal tours of downtown and homes
  o “First Friday” art events
  o “Taste of Hartwell” food and drink events
  o Street festivals
  o Farmers markets

• Expansion of special events in conjunction with fishing tournaments or at the mega ramp facility
  o Wake boarding/water skiing tournaments
  o Car, motorcycle and boat shows
  o Outdoor concerts
  o Fireworks events
  o Flea markets

MARKETING STRATEGIES

To attract visitors to Hartwell for either fishing, golf or leisure activities there are a range of strategies that are available. As mentioned above, fishing tournaments should be actively sought in the short-term to help establish Hartwell as a tourism destination. As exposure and tourism infrastructure grow, more visitors will become familiar with Hartwell as a family friendly destination with a wealth of resources just a short distance from major metropolitan areas like Atlanta, GA and Greenville, SC as well as the University of Georgia and Clemson University.

Hire a Tourism Marketing Director
In order to actively promote the fishing, historic, agro-related and golf tourism resources of the Hartwell region it is imperative to hire a Tourism Marketing Director to engage the local stakeholders and attract tourists to the area. A vibrant, enthusiastic representative of Hart County can paint a vivid picture of the Strategic Vision for investors, fishing tournament directors, city and county officials as well as for potential tourists to the region.

Fishing Tournaments
Fishing tournaments are an available resource to tap to generate an immediate impact from tourism due to the construction of the Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility. The desired and required amenities necessary for most national, regional and local tournaments are available at Gum Branch and in the city of Hartwell. It is important to utilize the mega ramp facility as an economic engine for further tourism development. With dozens of fishing organizations offering hundreds of tournaments a year, Hartwell should have no problem attracting events of all sizes. It is important to contact Tournament Directors and sell the resources of Lake Hartwell, Gum Branch and the city of Hartwell as soon as possible.
An additional strategy to emphasize sustainability and to differentiate Hartwell from similar locations, it is suggested the city, county, and local businesses create a marketing campaign to “off-set” the carbon and greenhouse gas emissions from the increase in boat activity on the lake due to tournaments. This can be done by calculating use on a “carbon calculator” that determines a dollar value on the amount of emissions emitted (https://sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/op_carboncalcs.html).

**Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (BASS)**
Contact Information  
Website:  [www.bassmaster.com](http://www.bassmaster.com)  
BASS Events Department  
PO Box 10277  
Lake Buena Vista, FL  32830  
407-566-2277  
Jeff Jones, Director, Georgia Federation Nation Tournaments  
Website:  [www.gabassfn.com](http://www.gabassfn.com)  
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**Bass Anglers Invitational Trail**  
Contact Information  
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Cason Mabry, Georgia Director  
[Charles.mabry1@wachovia.com](mailto:Charles.mabry1@wachovia.com)  
864-923-3259 (cell)

**Special Events and Functions**  
The city of Hartwell should be diligently working to organize local events and functions in addition to the on-going activities such as: Dancing on Depot, Pre-Fourth, Car shows, and farmers markets. Additionally, greater emphasis should be given to the development of Historic Hartwell tours and agrotourism-related activities. These events should coincide with fishing tournaments to present a lively picture of the area to tournament participants so they will return for non-tournament related visits.
Website Development

A fresh, updated and informational website is one of the greatest marketing tools available today. Those who are interested in new locations for lake activities or seasonal events should be able to easily locate an all inclusive website to learn more about Hartwell. Currently, the Chamber of Commerce hosts a website highlighting Hart County but seems to lack focus directly related to tourism, more importantly Tournament Fishing information. This offers an opportunity to create a widely recognizable and highly brandable website to emphasize the tourism resources.

A successful website for Hartwell should have a catchy name that is easily remembered and easily recognized. An example is: www.visithartwellga.com.

A successful website will be simple but attractive to internet visitors so a talented professional graphic designer is suggested. Additionally, the overall design of the website should be transferable to brochures, coupon books, maps, trade show banners and other advertising materials to assist in branding the website, and therefore the organization.

Prior to the final design of the website it is important to consider the optimization of the site. Known as “search engine optimization,” SEO helps to ensure higher organic search results from search engines such as Google and Yahoo!. This is a difficult and very important task. If a search engine is unable to locate the website, visitors will not be able to gain the knowledge the site was meant to provide. It is important to discuss this with the web designer and a few tips include (Appendix J):

- On Page SEO – The use of keywords that are directly related to site content and can be found throughout the site in the URL, headings and text.
- Off Page SEO – The inclusion of unique links on the website acts a positive “vote” for search engines. You also want links to your on other trustworthy websites.
- Start a Blog – Fresh, updated material such as a blog illustrates to search engines that you are constantly working on your site, and therefore is a positive “vote.” Additional updates include: event calendars, weather updates, lake and water reports.
- Convert Visitors to Leads with Forms – A contact form allows the website manager to create a database of visitors to the website that can act as a mailing list for electronic newsletters.
- Analyze Every Step – It is important to evaluate your website, its functionality, the visits the site receives and conversion rates of any money spent for advertising.

The usability of the website is highly important. Visitors should be able view the site and immediately understand what the content refers to: tourism. Website designers can add pages and links to other resources such as: Fishing Tournaments, Historic Hartwell, Golf Tourism, Downtown Development, Relocation, Real Estate. It is suggested that the Tourism Task Force, Chamber of Commerce, City of Hartwell, and Hart County officials work together on this website to provide the specialized service of tourism and tourism related activities. This site should be the “go to” tourism resource which all stakeholders can refer to.

One suggestion for the website is to offer sponsorship recognition which would provide a premium website location and a micro-webpage development. For example, the website could list a tab titled: Hartwell Business Directory. This page would post a logo of “sponsors” on this page and have a text listing of all local businesses. The logos would be linked to a micro-webpage, a one page website further detailing the sponsors business. The revenue generated from sponsor buy-ins could be useful for website design, internet advertising and/or marketing materials.

See Appendix K for a brief description of website tabs, pages, and variables to be listed.
Although a new website directly related to tourism is essential, it is also important to utilize existing websites for increased exposure. As mentioned above, creating link exchanges with other websites will assist in organic search engine results. For example, it will be useful to collaborate and link with the Chamber of Commerce (www.hart-chamber.org), Hartwell Downtown Development Authority (www.hartwellmainstreet.com), Hartwell, GA Government (http://hartwell.georgia.gov and www.hartwell-go.info), Lakefront Hartwell (www.lakefrontharwell.com), and the Lake Hartwell Association (www.lakehartwellassociation.org). Do not be afraid to cross state lines and work with organizations on the South Carolina portion of Lake Hartwell.

It would also be wise to contact Fishing Tournament Organizations to have the new website listed on their webpages.

Paid listings are another avenue to advertise the website. Many popular websites will not permit free link exchanges and charge businesses to post a website or “banner.” To be sure, these popular sites attract millions of visitors and that provides potential for a greater number of visitors to find your site. However, it is important to be knowledge of the content of these sites and to continue searching for paid listings until some are realized to offer high conversion rates, for little expense, with unique and specialized visitors who will be excited to discover your website.

Google Adwords is an internet advertising tool that assists in attracting unique visitors to your website. This protocol is called “pay per click” where you setup a snapshot text display of your product that appears in the right-side column of a Google search results page. Your designated keywords are matched with internet users search terms. If your keywords match their search terms, your ad will be displayed and internet users have the option to click on your ad and be taken directly to your website at which time you are charged a rate that is determined by the marketing/advertising manger. This is a simple process to setup and fairly easy to manage. To excel at this service, constant evaluation is suggested.

There are hundreds if not thousands of opportunities for collaboration, link exchanges and/or postings (both free and paid); the only limitation is your imagination. It is suggested however that the homepage of the website maintains a professional appearance and is not crowed with other website links or advertisements.

**Brochures, City Guides, Coupon Books**

Readily available high quality brochures allow the local Hartwell stakeholders (County and City officials, Chamber of Commerce officials, restaurant owners, hotels and downtown stores) to distribute informational pamphlets to those who are visiting or wish to receive more information regarding the Hartwell area. Brochures act as a “snapshot” of history, tourism amenities, points of interest, calendar of events, and general information. See Appendix L for an example of brochure designs (Hartwell and Gum Branch).

City guides provide much more information (hotels, restaurants, lake amenities, golf courses, storefronts, and tours/activities with detailed descriptions) and should compliment local brochures. Here, a detailed map denoting locations of tourism establishments provide visitors with useful information that can help guide them through town. It is suggested that the city guide include a coupon book. It is noted that coupon books are readily used by fishing tournament participants and they are expected to add value to the community through increased visitation of those businesses who participate in offering discounts.

**Trade Show Displays**

Standing banners, hanging banners, and table top displays that are associated with trade shows are a necessity. These displays should be of high quality and designed by an expert. It is important that the
**Trade Shows**

Trade shows provide an opportunity to reach a vast audience of potential visitors. For example, those who are willing to pay admission to the Georgia Boat Show obviously have an interest in boats, water activities or Georgia. By providing a display and information table regarding Hartwell Tourism, you can easily turn leads into clients.

Boat and Fishing Trade Shows should emphasize the resources of Lake Hartwell, specifically the Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility. Perhaps not all visitors at the trade show have an interest in tournaments, but it is expected that interaction with other exhibitors (e.g. B.A.S.S. or FLW Outdoors) will find interest in your product.

It is suggested Hartwell contact the tournament directors for the FLW Outdoors Forrest Wood Cup to have a presence at Georgia World Conference Center events which coincide with the tournament which will be held in August 2010.

Tourism-related Trade Shows will present a different picture than boat and fishing trade shows but not to a degree where the essence of fishing on Lake Hartwell is lost. Additionally, Golfing Trade Shows are suggested as well to promote Cateechee and the surrounding amenities of the Hartwell area.

Again, it is important to provide unified picture of Hartwell Tourism: Lake Hartwell, Historic Downtown, Cateechee Golf Course. The cross-pollination of participating in various trade shows with various themes only helps attract a wide variety of tourists.

**Magazine Advertisements**

Perhaps only necessary in the early stages of tourism marketing, select magazine advertising helps to promote the resources of Hartwell to a specific audience.

It is suggested to attract national, regional and local fishing tournaments advertisements for Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility be placed in the following magazines: BassMasters, BASS Times, FLW Outdoors, Kids All-American Fishing, and the American Anglers Tournament Trail.

Additional magazines could include: Golf Digest, Blue Ridge Country, Small Town Living and other similar publications. Local publications such as Lake Living and others are important outlets as well.

Finally, free advertising within a publication is always welcome. Contact local, regional and national newspapers and magazine publications that could enhance your product with a promotional story regarding tourism activities, amenities, and/or events.
MARKETING PLAN

Short-term (0-12 months)

Strategy One: Hire a fulltime Tourism Marketing Director
- Strategic Focus
  - To ensure a commitment to the expansion of tourism for the Hartwell region, it is necessary to have a trained and talented representative who can provide potential investors, tournament directors, tourist and local stakeholders with a clear and concise strategic vision of tourism development in and around Hartwell in order to expand current resources and enjoy the rewards of a successful tourism product.
- Goals and Objectives
  - A trained and talented fulltime Tourism Marketing Director (TMD) will wear many hats but focus efforts on the promotion of tourism resources of the Hartwell area
  - The TMD will work under ???
  - The TMD will work directly with local stakeholders to ensure that their concerns are heard and addressed
  - The TMD will work directly with local investors and developers to ensure that their concerns are heard and addressed
  - The TMD will work directly with the Tourism Task Force to ensure that their concerns are heard and addressed
  - The TMD will contact tournament directors to attract national, regional and local fishing tournaments to Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility
  - The TMD will be the “local” tournament director and coordinate activities to coincide with tournaments
  - The TMD will work with graphic designers website specialist to produce and promote the Hartwell website, brochures, city guides, trade show displays, magazine displays and other promotional materials
  - The TMD will promote Hartwell using online tools such as link exchange, banner advertising, pay-per-click and social networking
  - The TMD will attend a variety of trade shows to promote the tourism resources of Hartwell
- Financial Output
  - Annual Salary: $???
- Economic Return
  - TBD after 12-month period

Strategy Two: Attract Tournaments. Contact national, regional and local fishing organizations to attract fishing tournaments to the Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility.
- Strategic Focus
  - To explore all possible resources to attract national, regional and local fishing tournaments to the Gum Branch Mega Ramp Facility. Increased participation in these tournaments will allow the community of Hartwell to capture tourism dollars that will have a direct, indirect and induced economic impact while generating greater tax revenue for the city, county and state.
- Goals and Objectives
  - Contact and communicate with tournament directors promoting the fishing and tourism resources of the Hartwell region.
  - Secure one-day and multi-day tournaments throughout the year at Gum Branch
- Financial Outputs
  - Contacting tournament directors via email and follow up communications
• $0
  o Tournament buy-ins
    ▪ TBD
  o Carbon Emission Offsets
    ▪ To be determined using the carbon calculations

• Economic Returns
  o An estimated $744,000 annually under the Full Operation Scenario (40 one-day event, two one-day national events with one practice day, and one three-day regional event with one practice day (Table 7, Appendix E)).

**Strategy Three:** Marketing Materials. Develop a highly recognizable and brandable website, associated brochures, city guide and banner displays.
  • Strategic Focus
  • Goals and Objectives
  • Financial Outputs
  • Economic Returns

**Strategy Four:** Advertising. Market and advertise the website using online/internet resources, magazine advertising, billboard displays, and potential welcome center at Exit 177 on Interstate 85.
  • Strategic Focus
  • Goals and Objectives
  • Financial Outputs
  • Economic Returns

**Strategy Five:** Trade Shows. Register and attend regional and national trade shows related to local resources such as the Georgia Boat Show.
  • Strategic Focus
  • Goals and Objectives
  • Financial Outputs
    o Georgia Boat Show
    o FLW Outdoors, Forrest Cup Series, Georgia World Congress Center, August 2012
  • Economic Returns

**Strategy Six:** New Events and Tours. Develop and host several community functions and special events including new and innovative agro-related and historic tours and attractions.
  • Strategic Focus
  • Goals and Objectives
  • Financial Outputs
  • Economic Returns

*Mid-term (1-3 years)*

*Long-term (3-7 years)*
KEYS TO SUCCESS

Tourism developers should maintain sense of community and strive for sustainable development which will help to differentiate Hartwell from other lake communities in Northeast Georgia. In order to do so, the following qualities found in Social Entrepreneurs are relevant (How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas, Bornstein 2007):

- Willingness to self-correct
- Willingness to share credit
- Willingness to break free of established structures
- Willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries
- Willingness to work quietly
- Strong ethical impetus

Characteristics of Successful Development Bodies include:

- Engage in participatory program development process
- Adaptability and flexibility
- Multi and cross disciplinary
- Innovation

Logic Model for Program Development

- Situation
  - Needs Assessment
  - Symptoms vs. Problems
  - Stakeholder Engagement
- Priorities to Consider
  - Mission
  - Vision
  - Values
  - Mandates
  - Resources
  - Local dynamics
  - Collaborators
  - Competition
  - Intended Outcomes
- What are your Inputs (Assumptions)
  - Staff
  - Volunteers
  - Time
  - Money
  - Research base
  - Materials
  - Equipment
  - Technology
  - Partners
- What are your Outputs (Assumptions)
  - Activities / What we do
    - Conduct workshops
    - Deliver services
    - Develop products
    - Train
    - Provide consulting
- Marketing
- Facilitate
- Partner
- Work with media
  - Participation / Who we reach
    - Participants
    - Clients
    - Agencies
    - Decision makers
    - Customers
    - Media

- What are your Outcomes/Impact
  - Short-term
    - Learning
  - Medium-term
    - Action
  - Long-term
    - Conditions

- Evaluate and Adapt throughout the whole process

A visual description of the Logic Model for Development can be found in Appendix M.
APPENDICES
Appendix A
Appendix B
Appendix C
Appendix D
Appendix E
Appendix F
Appendix G
Appendix I
Appendix J
Appendix K
Appendix L