St. Augustine
Historic Area Strategic Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | JANUARY 2009

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STRAategic PLAN Steering Committee

In Partnership with:

City of St. Augustine and the National Park Service
In 2015, the United States will celebrate the 450th birthday of our first successful colonial settlement — St. Augustine, Florida. St. Augustine was established in 1565, 42 years before the first successful English colony of Jamestown. These first European settlers in America were Spanish. Hispanic colonists lived and worked in St. Augustine for two centuries, and shaped the course of American history. They also created a vibrant, multicultural society that is little known to most Americans today.

Many buildings, artifacts and sites exist today in St. Augustine as a testament to the long and storied history of this oldest continuously occupied American city. In celebration of the 400th anniversary of St. Augustine in 1965, reconstructed buildings were added to the St. Augustine landscape to depict life in the early settlement, many of which were constructed on original building foundations. The state-owned historic properties in St. Augustine embody the story of this first colony in a collection of original and reconstructed buildings located on several key properties within the National Landmark Historic District.

Creating world class heritage tourism experiences has reaped significant economic return for communities, such as Jamestown and Gettysburg, that are willing to make a focused, coordinated effort. An economic impact study of Jamestown’s 400th anniversary in 2007 showed that the commemoration generated nearly 21,000 jobs, $1.2 billion in sales for state businesses and $28 million in state and local tax revenues. Similarly, Pennsylvania’s $20 million investment in Gettysburg historic resources resulted in visitor spending averaging $293.40 per day. The appropriate marketing and investment in St. Augustine’s significant historic resources can reap similar benefits for the local community and the State.
MISSION AND VISION

To guide the strategic planning effort, UF formed advisory groups that include leading UF administrators and faculty; local leaders from St. Augustine and St. Johns County; as well as representatives of key stakeholders such as the National Park Service (NPS) and Flagler College. UF students have also been involved in the overall effort, led by architecture, landscape architecture, and historic preservation faculty. Through an ongoing series of stakeholder meetings in St. Augustine, UF has achieved a high level of community support for the strategic planning effort.

The Historic Area Strategic Plan was completed in January 2009, and aims to fulfill the following Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles set forth by UF in collaboration with local constituencies.

MISSION STATEMENT

“...To ensure long-term preservation and interpretation of state-owned historic properties in St. Augustine while facilitating an educational program at UF that will be responsive to the state’s needs for professionals in history, historic preservation, archaeology, cultural resource management, cultural tourism, and museum administration and will help meet needs of St. Augustine and the state through educational internships and practicums.” (Adapted from Chapter 267.1735, F.S.)

VISION

The historic resources in St. Augustine shall provide a visitor and educational experience that enhances the St. Augustine community, meets the needs of the State of Florida, and garners worldwide acclaim by preserving St. Augustine’s history as a valuable national treasure.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Educational Collaboration
- Physical Cohesiveness
- Economic Development
- Partnership Finance
- Effective Administration

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Construction of a new interpretive center as the focal point for visitor access to state-owned parcels and buildings
- Restoration and rehabilitation of the existing state-owned buildings to protect these important public assets
- Implementation of public infrastructure improvements to support the visitor experience including a wayfinding/signage strategy and transportation system modifications
- Application of the “layers of history,” embodying various periods and themes, as the framework for organizing the visitor experience for both the state-owned parcels or buildings and other community assets
- Operation of a direct support organization with established priority criteria and an economic model adaptive tool to aid future decision-making as it relates to the state-owned parcels and buildings

FUNDING NEEDS

The St. Augustine Historic Area Strategic Plan includes a cost estimate with which to approach funding sources for implementation of the recommendations related specifically to the needed restoration and rehabilitation of state-owned buildings, construction of a new Interpretive Center and the development and installation of interpretive content.

Funding requests for the implementation of these recommendations are summarized as follows:

- Interpretive Center (State portion including interpretive content) ...................................... $4,981,500
- Interpretive Content for Existing State-Owned Assets ........................................... $215,000
- Building Rehabilitation/Restoration ................................................................. $26,671,000

  SUBTOTAL ........... $31,867,500

- Interpretive Center (NPS portion including interpretive content) ...................................... $4,981,500

  TOTAL .................... $36,849,000

Rehabilitation and restoration costs may be partially offset by Plant Operations and Maintenance (PO&M) funds for state-owned assets having eligibility based on their educational use. ($8.4376 per gross square footage for air conditioned space and $6.2447 per gross square footage for non-air conditioned space)

- Recurring PO&M for Existing State-Owned Assets (FY 2009-10) .................................. $479,000
- Recurring PO&M for Interpretive Center (FY 2009-10) ........................................... $143,000

  TOTAL .................... $622,000

The City of St. Augustine, the National Park Service and the University of Florida have mutually stated their desire to collaborate on the design and construction of a new Interpretive Center. The nearly $10 Million construction cost is expected to be met by equal contributions of the State of Florida and the NPS.
A new Interpretive Center will serve as a focal point and entry portal for historic area visitors. The priority location identified for this facility is informally known as the Mary Peck Property, directly across from the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument. This location for the Interpretive Center would link the historic military life of the fort and the civilian life associated with the state-owned assets in the Spanish Quarter. Under the preferred alternative, the new Interpretive Center would be developed jointly with the NPS and the City of St. Augustine with financial support from the State of Florida and the Federal government.

These Interpretive Center images were created to provide a vision of the potential impacts associated with the introduction of a new signature facility at the location and is not to represent a final design or building appearance.

This image of the proposed new Interpretive Center is situated on Route A1A looking north. The Castillo de San Marcos National Monument is to the right in this view.

This potential access location to the proposed new Interpretive Center is from St. George Street at the current site of the Peso de Burgo buildings, looking north, assuming relocation of these buildings. The entrance to the Interpretive Center is shown as a gated opening in a new garden wall and the proposed new Interpretive Center is shown in the background.
The Physical Plan Strategies emphasize cohesiveness, convenience and visitor comfort. An Interpretive Center was recommended to integrate the state-owned assets into their surroundings, facilitate partnerships with the NPS and City of St. Augustine, and provide a focal point for educational programming.

Linkages and access provided by public infrastructure were evaluated to identify opportunities for improvement. Wayfinding and signage elements will identify options offered by historic St. Augustine that will enhance the visitor experience, while appropriately identifying the UF presence.

**Public Infrastructure Improvement**

Infrastructure and landscape improvements are focused on six critical areas:

**Area 1: Between Existing Visitor Information Center (VIC) and Old City Gate**

Improvements in this area will include adjustments to Orange Street and the off ramp from A1A to Orange Street. There is also a good opportunity to reconnect the Cubo Line, extending to the Castillo and directing visitors to St. George Street and Avenida Menendez.

**Area 2: Grounds and Parking Area of Castillo de San Marcos**

Current plans for the fort include reducing the parking area. This will help to visually reconnect the fort to the new Visitor Interpretive Center and the rest of the historic area.

**Area 3: Plaza de la Constitución and Adjacent Streets**

The city should consider improving the Plaza de la Constitución in an effort to improve the pedestrian connections between St. George Street and Aviles Street, which lead to historic destinations south of King Street.

**Area 4: Historic Area Street Scaping**

The goal is to seamlessly blend public space design, lighting, planting greenery, paving, signs, amenities and other elements to achieve a sense of identity and unity along the entire stretch of the Castillo Street Scape. For example, new pedestrian spaces at Orange Street can benefit from a brick or coquina cement surface to provide a visual cue for vehicular traffic.

**Area 5: AIA Pedestrian Crosswalks**

It is recommended that pedestrian access to the Interpretive Center across A1A be handled by an existing crosswalk plus a relocated crosswalk at the Interpretive Center. Within the existing right of way, it may be feasible to provide additional space for pedestrian enhancements through a reduction in the number of the existing through travel lanes on this segment of A1A. Pedestrian enhancements may also include the provision of a grass median, wider sidewalks and crosswalks, pedestrian countdown signals and street scape enhancements identified in Area 4.

Federal funds may be available for the provision of improvements that would enhance pedestrian movements and safety across A1A in this area. Further study of the feasibility of this option in conjunction with the FDOT and adjacent landowners, specifically the NPS, is required.

**Area 6: Trolley Routes**

Currently, there are two existing privately owned and operated trolley routes that tour St. Augustine’s downtown historic district, the Old Town Trolley Tours and the Ripley’s Sightseeing Train. The free city shuttle service should be reinstated with a new shelter at the Plaza de la Constitución. Those who choose to walk from the VIC and adjacent parking facility could be transported back to the garage quickly and comfortably. It may also encourage tourists to take the shuttle directly to the plaza in order to visit the attractions south of King Street.
The Exhibit and Educational Strategies propose a visitor experience strategy, which defines a format for conveying the history that is the story of St. Augustine. The “Layers of History” strategy was developed to support the creation of an authentic heritage tourism experience utilizing state-owned assets to complement surrounding historic sites and community context.

The “Layers of History” framework is a more generalized approach that attempts to organize the complex history of periods and themes into “layers” that can be presented to the uninitiated visitor. In this way, the “layers” serve to whet the appetite of the visitor to seek a more in-depth understanding by visiting the various interpretive sites in St. Augustine.

**EXHIBIT AND EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES**

Scholars typically describe the story of St. Augustine through the following chronological periods:
- Settlement Origins and the Early Colony (1565-1600)
- The Developing City (1600-1763)
- The British Interregnum and the Arrival of the Minorcans (1763-1784)
- Spanish Restoration (1784-1821)
- U.S. Territory and Statehood (1822-1861)
- Civil War, Reconstruction and Gilded Age (1861-1917)
- World War I to the Present (1918-2009)

Cutting across and bridging these periods were numerous thematic subjects:
- Prehistory
- Religion
- Maritime History
- Military Life
- Indian Relations
- Warfare and Sieges
- Trade and Commerce
- Lifestyles
- First Schools and Hospitals
- Architectural Styles
- Agriculture, Fishing and Ornamental Horticulture
- Tourism
- Minority Residents

**WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE ELEMENTS**

- **Main Visitor Information Kiosks** – These elements will give the visitor a comprehensive understanding of all the options so that they can plan their day. This kiosk may include a map of the area, print materials and/or interactive screens and media. These main kiosks would be located at the Visitor Information Center and the Plaza de la Constitución.

- **Key Decision-Making Points** – Placed throughout the city, these signage elements would be located at key junctures. Some may be two- or four-sided; others, depending on the available area, will be smaller in scale, with directions only.

- **Interpretive Signs** – These can be placed so that the visitor on a self-guided tour can gain more insight as to the historic significance of the property.

- **Banners** – Acting as an arrival statement, this feature will highlight the main path of travel to the St. Augustine Historic Area along A1A.

- **UF Branding** – As part of determining appropriate UF Branding of state-owned assets, it is necessary to evaluate the existing signage that is related to a state seal or a historic designation. The intent is not to add to the signage clutter, but to create a “marker” or brand to link the UF interpretive sites together.
Layers of History Examples

SPANISH SETTLEMENT ORIGINS AND THE EARLY COLONY

- This experience can encourage visitors to vividly imagine the first colonial settlement as interpreted through living history, architectural venues, archeological and historical sites. People of Spanish, Caribbean, Native American and African heritage co-existed in Spanish St. Augustine. Visitors can experience how families and individuals interact when multiple cultures are living with competing visions.

THE DEVELOPING CITY

- Experience these later colonial and American periods highlighting the second Spanish, British and Territorial eras communicating the drama associated with St. Augustine’s military history. This can also highlight the long-standing heritage of Minorcans in Florida and St. Augustine.

FLAGLER ERA BOOM

- Experience the Gilded Age of Railroads and Flagler’s vision to bring tourism to Florida as a winter retreat for the wealthy, with luxury hotels. Celebrate the art and architecture that distinguish St. Augustine from any other city in the country.

AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND CIVIL RIGHTS

- Visitors can learn about the history of the struggle for equality during the Civil Rights era and earlier by seeing key sites such as the St. Mary’s Missionary Baptist Church where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke. Early African American history can be interpreted at nearby Ft. Mose, and the broader struggle for human rights can be presented through St. Augustine history involving Spanish women’s rights, slave life, free blacks, and Native Americans.

PRESERVATION

- The experience of visiting St. Augustine can become relevant to today by interacting in real time with archeologists, historians, architects, interpreters and preservationists.

40th Anniversary to Commemorate the Civil Rights Demonstrations, Inc. (ACCORD)

Shirley Williams-Galvin, ACORD Photographer
The Marketing Strategies provide recommendations for economically viable operation of the state-owned assets in St. Augustine, while supporting UF’s educational mission. It includes the development of an economic model as a decision tool and a ticketing strategy.

Economic Model as a Decision Tool
The model measures incremental budget impacts as the portfolio of property use or related cost assumptions change. It addresses three dimensions of financial performance: operating revenue, operating expense and capital investment.

Changeable Model Inputs
- Property use: interpretive, educational or commercial
- Lease rates: current rates are reflected in model assumptions

When assigned a property use, the model automatically adjusts revenues and expenses based on model assumptions associated with each potential use (interpretive vs. educational vs. commercial). For example, assets used for an educational or interpretive purpose are eligible for state funds, per square footage of space, to offset portions of operating expenses such as utilities.

Ticketing Strategy
A centralized ticketing strategy should be developed to allocate admissions revenues between UF and other partners, such as the NPS. A computerized ticketing database could measure visitation data, including details regarding locations visited with site specific readers.

The Implementation Strategies incorporate preliminary recommendations for the business plan, management strategy, funding strategy and a suggested system of performance monitors and measures. As these responsibilities are carried out by the direct support organization (DSO), the performance measures will help to steady the course.

Direct Support Organization
According to Florida Statute 267.1736, the DSO for St. Augustine Historic Area will be:

“Organized and operated to receive, hold, invest and administer property and to make expenditures to, or for, the benefit of the university, in a manner consistent with the goals of the university and in the best interest of the state.”

Major Responsibilities of the DSO:
- Support historic preservation efforts and educational programs
- Make financial decisions (revenues and expenditures)