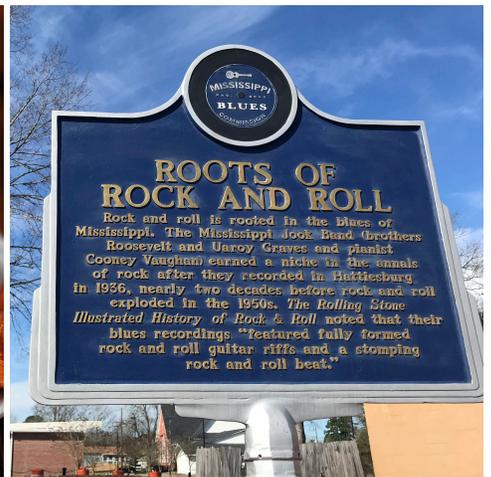


# CRAFT YOUR OWN ADVENTURE



**VISITHATTIESBURG™**

FY2018 ANNUAL REPORT

10.1.17 - 9.30.18\*



\*Report does not include the last two months of the fiscal year.  
Full FY2018 report submitted upon completion of 2018 audit.

# BIOGRAPHY OF VISITHATTIESBURG

In 2018, tourism was a \$274 million a year industry in Hattiesburg. It continues to grow every day.

Created in 1990 by the Mississippi State Legislature, the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission (HTC), doing business as VisitHATTIESBURG™, serves as the official Destination Marketing Organization (Convention & Visitors Bureau), and local industry leader for tourism in the City of Hattiesburg. VisitHBURG is governed by a seven-member board representing the business community and the local tourism industry. With primary funding generated by a 2% hotel bed tax, the guiding mission of VisitHBURG is very specific: to introduce new dollars into the Hattiesburg economy through increased short-term visitation and overnight travel.

From the start, local partnerships have played a critical role in the work of VisitHBURG. The vast amount of VisitHBURG's partnerships is vital to its efforts to grow the area's tourism industry. Such partnerships include local hotels, restaurants, and attractions, entities such as the City of Hattiesburg, the Area Development Partnership, William Carey University, The University of Southern Mississippi, the Forrest County Board of Supervisors, the Downtown Hattiesburg Association, Hattiesburg Convention Commission, and many others.

Through such partnerships, VisitHBURG has been able to serve as a catalyst for significant and unique events in Hattiesburg, such as Pre-Olympic Training in 1996, the Mississippi Miss Hospitality

Competition for the last 21 years, Hattiesburg Craft Beer Festival, numerous concert series, the inaugural Star-Spangled Celebration on the River Independence Day event, the creation of the Dearly-Departed Walking Tour at Halloween, and the recruitment of various art-related exhibits throughout town.

An innovative and artistic hub of the Gulf South, Hattiesburg has emerged as a premier visitor destination with an impressive sense of place for business and leisure travelers. The city is rapidly becoming an event, history, live music, outdoor attraction and culinary destination for millennials and baby boomers.

VisitHBURG operates on the notion that successful destination marketing organizations and convention and visitors bureaus provide the proper balance of community assets and user-friendly interfaces for information sharing. VisitHBURG's ultimate goal is to be a comprehensive travel resource for today's tourists to use and for the future of travel.

To fully realize Hattiesburg's true potential as a visitor destination, the team at VisitHBURG must ensure its continued commitment to effective growth strategies in a competitive marketing environment. Overall, the team is pleased with the results of 2017, looking forward to more years of growth and prosperity for the Hattiesburg community.

## HATTIESBURG TOURISM COMMISSION MEMBERS

- CHAIR : Frank James, Hotel Industry Rep.
- VICE CHAIR : Anthony Harris, P.E., Economic Development Rep.
- Adrienne Hicks Garanich, Hotel Industry Rep.
- Fei Xue, Ph.D., USM Rep.
- Marshall Bell, At-Large
- Bonnie Warren, At-Large
- Torsky Williams, At-Large

## VISITHATTIESBURG STAFF MEMBERS

- Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director
- Paige Hunt, Director of Sales & Visitor Services
- Paige Crane, Director of Communications & Digital Strategies
- Kristen Brock, Programs & Promotions Manager



# FINDING HBURG | #VISITHBURG

Campaign embraces Hattiesburg's authentic flavor, local craft, and term of endearment.

## HATTIE'S HISTORY:

Prior to being known as VISITHATTIESBURG™, Hattiesburg's Convention and Visitor's Bureau was known as Hattiesburg Tourism Commission. Under this title, the commission focused on a "Hattie" brand, which had a southern charm appeal to it. In 2002, VISITHATTIESBURG™ took on a rebranding marketing project that had never been accomplished before within the Mississippi tourism industry. In 2003, the commission unveiled the results of a 16-month research and development project to launch a new tourism branding campaign. They created the "Hattie" brand, featuring a southern belle hat and pastels, to convey the persona of Hattiesburg as warm and hospitable. This brand persisted for more than 10 years and cemented Hattiesburg as the ideal, affordable, family-friendly, weekend getaway.

## #VISITHBURG

In 2015, VISITHATTIESBURG™ again shifted its brand. Moving away from the "Hattie" brand and southern charm appeal, the focus was to show Hattiesburg as fresh and distinct. Inspired by Hattiesburg's charming nickname "HBURG," VISITHATTIESBURG™ set out to develop a brand that not only connected locals to their city but would also be recognized nationally as being a tourism destination in the State of Mississippi.



Hattiesburg used the recent craft beer movement and growth to help tell its story. Playing on this unique niche and notable part of the city, Hattiesburg was able to propel itself to the forefront of destinations due to its unique cultural offerings and local treasures. VISITHATTIESBURG™ told the city's developing story all the while featuring

Hattiesburg's southern spirit and community vibe.

The catalyst for this campaign was the creation of a new mark for Hattiesburg, featuring HBURG and implementing the shape of Mississippi. The design pairs a simple, yet bold color palette with strong, modern typography — a contemporary take on Hattiesburg's spirit — appealing to both the young and the young at heart.



VISITHATTIESBURG™ honed on its techniques and its people and has since been producing new creative work, highlighting home-grown flavors, rich culture and the local trademark, craft beer. The campaign uses an assortment of curated and user-generated photographs, drawing on the authentic gentility of this vibrant — and crafty — community.

The user-generated content is collected through the use of the hashtag #VisitHBURG, which persist across print, digital, and outdoor promotions, as well as all major social media platforms. A collection of photographs appears in each of the ads, which collectively emphasize Hattiesburg's local flavor and genuine craftsmanship.



# VISITHBURG BY THE NUMBERS



DIGITAL AND IN-PERSON OUTREACH CONTINUES TO GROW IN FY2018.



14.1% ↑  
FOLLOWERS



13.2% ↑  
INCREASE



32.8% ↑  
INCREASE



500+ TOURISM  
EVENTS



854% INCREASE  
CONTACTS ↑

## VISIT MISSISSIPPI

Out-of-state visitors spent an estimated

**\$4.9 BILLION**

in Mississippi in FY2017.

Mississippi's

**87,335**

direct travel and tourism jobs in FY2017 were the most in 12 years.

### MISSISSIPPI TRAVELER

Avg. Household Income \$71,900  
Avg. Travel Party Size 2.5  
Avg. Nights Spent 2.9  
Avg. Age 48

## 2017 VALUE OF TOURISM IN HBURG



**1.8 Million** Visitors  
**\$278 Million** in Visitor Spending



**200+** Local Dining Options,  
including several Best-of Mississippi's



**2,824** Hotel Rooms  
adding 200+ more in 2018



**4,270** Tourism Industry Jobs\*  
\*Source: Mississippi Development Authority



**3+ Million** Targeted Digital Impressions of HBURG Brand\*  
\*Regional Craft Adventure Campaign



**400+** Live Music or Entertainment Events Annually

# HBURG RED CARPET & VISITOR SERVICES

## RED CARPET SERVICES

The complimentary Red Carpet Services provided by our friendly Tourism Ambassadors at VISITHATTIESBURG™ help maximize the success of meetings, conventions and reunions that meet requirements including the usage of a minimum of 20 hotel rooms in Hattiesburg.



Red Carpet Services (RCS) is a program of VisitHBURG that promotes a variety of complimentary services offered to planners considering Hattiesburg for their motorcoach tour, meeting, convention, sporting event or reunion.

These specialized services provide hospitality and support to groups visiting Hattiesburg. A marketing tool to differentiate Hattiesburg, RCS makes it easy for the decision-maker to choose to bring their group's tourism dollars to our area. The complimentary services offered through RCS are based on overnight stays.

In 2018, VisitHBURG updated its offerings and sales kit (shown below) to include a comprehensive meeting planners guide, HBURG profile sheet, and list of must-visit hotspots in Hattiesburg.

## FY2018 QUICK FACTS

WELCOME BAGS SUPPLIED: Approx.

9,000

PEOPLE SERVED: Approx.

15,000

### VISITHBURG SALES DESTINATIONS:

TRAVEL SOUTH USA DOMESTIC SHOWCASE, BILOXI, MS / SPOTLIGHT ON THE SOUTHEAST, BIRMINGHAM, AL / MSAE LUNCH AND LEARNS, JACKSON, MS

### SALES BLITZ WITH HOTEL PARTNERS:

VISITED 42 ASSOCIATIONS IN TWO DAYS IN JACKSON, MS. THREE HOTEL PARTNERS JOINED THE BLITZ TEAM.

**VisitHBURG**

**HUB CITY**  
TENNESSEE  
MISSISSIPPI  
LOUISIANA

**Welcome to Hattiesburg, Mississippi!**  
Connect with our bustling live music scene or our impressive variety of local eateries. Discover our art and culinary scenes, military museums, and beautiful outdoor recreations.

**TOP 5 reasons for your group to #VisitHBURG**

- 1 Group-friendly attractions** Whether a Zoo, museum, or gallery, groups are welcome at all attractions.
- 2 Thriving Hotel Sector** Our nationally-recognized hotels are modern and ready to serve you!
- 3 Signature Events** HBURG's events are varied and great for large groups of all sizes.
- 4 Vibrant Dining & Music Scene** Enjoy local flavors and jam while in HBURG.
- 5 Red Carpet Services** We provide itinerary planning, hospitality bags, and more for groups.

**DRIVING DISTANCES**  
MS Gulf Coast - 1.5 hours  
New Orleans - 1.75 hours  
Birmingham - 3.25 hours  
Jackson - 1.5 hours  
Mobile - 1.75 hours  
Memphis - 4.5 hours

**5 Convention Center Plaza**  
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

**VISITHBURG.ORG**  
601.296.7475

**HBURG**  
HATTIESBURG, MS  
**MEETING PLANNERS GUIDE**

**HBURG Hotspots**

- 1** Experience our craft brewery **Southern Prohibition** through a private behind-the-scenes tour. While there, enjoy a craft beer from the taproom, admire art, social games, and even a pie from the **Mercury Pizza** food truck.
- 2** Rejuvenated from an old railroad track, the **41 miles Longleaf Trace** winds through Hattiesburg and surrounding towns. Guests enjoy walking, running, and biking the Trace, with stops along the way, including a variety of guided or unguided tours.
- 3** From food trucks to a brewery and everything in between, **Hattiesburg Downtown Hattiesburg** is something for everyone. From a pop, hold a drink, jam to live music, or dig in at a local restaurant. Read more through **Hattiesburg**.
- 4** With more than 10 species of animals from across the globe, **Hattiesburg Zoo** offers a uniquely personal and fun-filled experience for adults, kids, and large groups. Adventures can take a walk in the **Cave** or on the Zoo's four-story **High Ropes**.
- 5** HBURG live music scene is not only the talk of the town but also the region. A variety of all genres are welcome. Whether you're in the mood for a full-on night of jazz or need to drive the right away, there's always a melody of options to enjoy.
- 6** No matter what you're in the mood for, you won't be disappointed or hungry when you're at **300 local restaurants** in HBURG. Our **culinary scene** includes everything from casual, fast, casual, and vibrant to boutique locations.
- 7** Home to the Southeast's only **African American Military History Museum**, the state's largest **Freedom Summer Trail**, and the **Mississippi Armed Forces Museum** at Camp Shelby, history buffs can immerse themselves in the past in HBURG.
- 8** Early Mississippi's most unique shopping experience, **The Lucky Rabbit** offers an atmosphere unlike any other. Filled with one-of-a-kind pieces, mosaics, and vintage finds, you won't leave disappointed or empty-handed.

# HBURG HIGHLIGHTS

From 1990 to 2018, HBURG'S tourism economy quadrupled in size.



## NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NAMED - FY2018

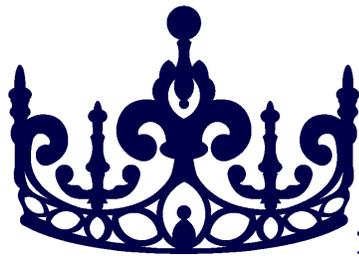


After a nationwide search that spanned months, a new executive director was named in September 2017. Marlo Dorsey was selected for the position, effective October 1, 2017.

- Sponsored the first Dearly Departed Walking Tour in Downtown, which sold out days in advance.
- Supported the MS Bicentennial Project - HBURG Storytellers - that featured local "celebrities" telling their unique story via interactive displays in Downtown Hattiesburg.
- Named a top 25 holiday shopping destination by Expedia for Olde Tyme Christmas, Holiday Art Walk, and Holiday Expo.
- Hosted Travel South USA Showcase's pre-FAM tour with travel writers and group tour operators focusing on craft beer, history, and culinary tourism.
- Event and marketing support for the Hattie 100 Bike Ride, Live at Five, FestivalSouth, and Best of the Pine Belt.
- Hosted six Mississippi Golf Association tournament registrations at local courses as well as two multi-day, multi-location baseball tournaments.
- Partnered with the City of Hattiesburg, Downtown Hattiesburg Association, Petal Area Chamber of Commerce, and others to present the inaugural "Star-Spangled Celebration on the River" July 4th event.

## GROWTH MILESTONES - LAST 10 YEARS

- 2007** • HTC awarded \$2 million HUD advertising grant  
Hattiesburg's Historic Train Depot re-opens  
Thad Cochran Center opens at the USM  
HTC changes operating name to VISITHATTIESBURG™  
Hotel inventory grows to more than 2,500 rooms  
Hattiesburg visitors spent \$211 million
- 2008** • Blues Trail Marker unveiled on Historic Mobile Street  
Downtown hosts the first "Live at Five" Concert Series  
Hattiesburg visitors spent \$227 million
- 2009** • VisitHBURG hosts Governor's Conference on Tourism  
City of Hattiesburg hosts 125th Celebration  
Visitors Center celebrates 5th year  
African-American Military History Museum opens  
Saenger Theater celebrates 80 years  
Hattiesburg visitors spent \$234 million
- 2010** • Blues Trail Marker unveiled at Hi-Hat Club location  
Freedom Summer Trail Audio Tour unveiled  
VisitHBURG hosts Heritage Day  
Inaugural FestivalSouth  
Tourism & Convention Commissions partner to manage Hattiesburg Zoo  
VisitHBURG hosts Tradition/Innovation art exhibit  
Hattiesburg visitors spent \$241 million
- 2011** • Hattiesburg Flag Plaza opens  
VisitHBURG and Hattiesburg Historic Downtown Association partner to host New Harmonies art exhibit  
Hattiesburg visitors spent \$225 million
- 2012** • Hattie Mural unveiled at the Visitors Center  
NTTW campaign receives Research-In-Action Award  
Hattiesburg visitors spent \$233 million
- 2013** • Inaugural Hattiesburg Craft Beer Festival
- 2014** • Hattiesburg Zoo opens Asbury Discovery Center  
Hattiesburg visitors spent \$255 million
- 2015** • Hattiesburg Zoo unveils Hattie the Elephant statue in Hattie Plaza  
Hattiesburg Association for Public Art reveals public art sculptures throughout Historic Downtown Hattiesburg  
VisitHBURG received Tourism Office of the Year Award at the Governor's Conference on Tourism  
Hattiesburg visitors spent \$258 million
- 2016** • Launched Ales to Trails campaign  
VisitHBURG assisted \$25,000 to light the Longleaf Trace  
Hattiesburg visitors spent \$274 million
- 2017** • Released new promotional campaign, which included a website and video and larger social media presence, and won Best Overall Promotional Campaign at MS Governor's Conference at Tourism  
Hosted regional MSAE Conference - "Hattiesburg & All that Jazz"  
Sponsored the MS Cycling 200 Ride, Levitt Amp Outdoor Music Series, and Dearly Beloved Premier Bridal Show  
Light pole banner project on Hwy 49 and in Downtown HBURG  
Marketing and Publicity Chair for Camp Shelby's Centennial Celebration



# Miss Hospitality MISSISSIPPI

## 2018 REBRANDING & GROWTH

In preparation for the 2018 competition, Mississippi Miss Hospitality began a rebranding process that included a new logo and the addition of two new components to the program. The Mississippi Miss Hospitality organization offered an At-Large contestant option this year for areas that did not have a local director. Additionally, a Little Miss Hospitality element was added for young girls ages 6-10. These young ladies serve alongside their local representative for the duration of their reign, with the winner's Little Miss serving with her as the state's goodwill ambassador. A social media component was also added to the program this year encourage advocacy about tourism and economic development in Mississippi. Contestants were provided a calendar of topics to showcase the state as well as attractions in each of their hometowns. Hashtags #ExploreMS and #MSHosp2018 were used on all postings.



**MISSISSIPPI MISS HOSPITALITY 2018  
ANNA MCDANIEL**



**INAUGURAL GROUP OF LITTLE MISS HOSPITALITIES  
2018 LMH : KENNEDY MCDANIEL**



**WOMEN OF DISTINCTION FAREWELL BRUNCH,  
FEATURING U.S. SENATOR CINDY HYDE-SMITH**

Anna McDaniel, a native of Meridian, was crowned the 69th Mississippi Miss Hospitality in July 2018. She is a junior mass communications major at William Carey University. McDaniel serves as the current editor-in-chief of the university newspaper *The Cobbler* and is a Student Government Association representative. McDaniel also auditioned on season fifteen of *American Idol* before competing for the title of Mississippi's Miss Hospitality. She is the daughter of Brad and Lisa McDaniel.

Mississippi Miss Hospitality's top five contestants were:

Anna McDaniel, 2018 Mississippi Miss Hospitality  
Tavia Moore of Stone County, first alternate  
Victoria Bean of Lauderdale County, second alternate  
Kinley Thornton of Greene County, third alternate  
Maddie Sullivant of Panola County, fourth alternate

# HATTIESBURG

• NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK 2018 •

## Travel: THEN AND NOW

National Travel & Tourism Week is an annual event coordinated by the U.S. Travel Association and is designed to celebrate the value of tourism and the contributions travel makes to the economy.

The 2018 celebration, May 6 – 12, 2018, marks the 35th anniversary of this 1983 U.S. Congressional resolution.



## 2018 NTTW SHINING STARS

The Shining Star award is Hattiesburg's only service-industry recognition where dozens of hospitality professionals are formally honored each year at our partner's luncheon during our weeklong celebration. The 2018 Shining Star award recipients, nominated by their managers or community members, are listed below.

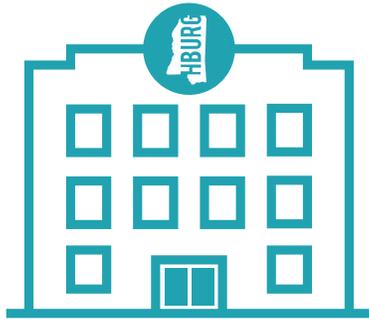
**TOURISM COMMISSIONERS PRESENTED VISITOR SPENDING CHECK TO CITY OF HATTIESBURG**

### HBURG EVENTS:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Friday, May 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lucky Rabbit Pop-Up Visitors Center</li> </ul>  | <p>Thursday, May 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>#TBT Social Media Celebration of Travel</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Monday, May 7 &amp; Tuesday, May 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitors Center Open House</li> <li>Partner Thank You Blitz</li> </ul> | <p>Friday, May 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ADP Second Friday Breakfast</li> <li>VisitHATTIESBURG presents Live at Five Encore</li> </ul> |
| <p>Wednesday, May 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shining Star Luncheon</li> </ul>   |  |



- |                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Meagan Duckworth</b>           | Area Development Partnership      |
| <b>Jamie Jefferson</b>            | Baymont Inn & Suites              |
| <b>Mamie Seals</b>                | Baymont Inn & Suites              |
| <b>Blu Jazz Café Staff</b>        | Downtown Hattiesburg Assoc.       |
| <b>Mequesha Thompson</b>          | Candlewood Suites                 |
| <b>D'Johnny Jackson</b>           | City of Hattiesburg               |
| <b>John McLemore</b>              | City of Hattiesburg               |
| <b>Nelson Cubley</b>              | City of Hattiesburg               |
| <b>Rebecca Acker</b>              | City of Hattiesburg               |
| <b>Jacky Keyes</b>                | Comfort Suites                    |
| <b>Pam Sanders</b>                | Comfort Suites                    |
| <b>Sue Gann</b>                   | Comfort Suites                    |
| <b>Judy Haynes</b>                | Fairfield Inn and Suites          |
| <b>Karen Knight</b>               | Fairfield Inn and Suites          |
| <b>Anitra Anderson</b>            | Hampton Inn and Home2 Suites      |
| <b>Michelle McIntyre</b>          | Hampton Inn and Home2 Suites      |
| <b>Roxie Barber</b>               | Hampton Inn and Home2 Suites      |
| <b>Rebekah Johnson</b>            | Hattiesburg Arts Council          |
| <b>Cathy Baca</b>                 | Hattiesburg Convention Commission |
| <b>Chad McClendon</b>             | Hilton Garden Inn                 |
| <b>Gloria Nelson</b>              | Hilton Garden Inn                 |
| <b>Jeannette Bryant</b>           | Hilton Garden Inn                 |
| <b>Kristin Smith</b>              | Hilton Garden Inn                 |
| <b>Reginald Chapman</b>           | Hilton Garden Inn                 |
| <b>Ross Andrus</b>                | Hilton Garden Inn                 |
| <b>Austin Byrd</b>                | Holiday Inn and Suites            |
| <b>Jeremy Barnes</b>              | Holiday Inn and Suites            |
| <b>Jermaine Mabon</b>             | Holiday Inn and Suites            |
| <b>Lonny Nelson</b>               | Holiday Inn and Suites            |
| <b>Abby &amp; Brandon Thaxton</b> | The Lucky Rabbit                  |
| <b>Shannon Gandy</b>              | TownePlace Suites                 |
| <b>Shuntae Kelly</b>              | TownePlace Suites                 |



# HBURG HOTEL & HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION

## ESTABLISHED 2018

The HBURG Hotel & Hospitality Association held their first meeting in March 2018 with plans to host a meeting once each quarter to strengthen partnerships, share best practices, and network with the staff at VisitHBURG. The group consists of General Managers and Directors of Sales from Hattiesburg's 41 hotel and bed & breakfast properties. The group adopted short-term goals at the first meeting.

## SHORT-TERM GOALS

- To keep the Hattiesburg hotel industry up to date on the projects, special initiatives, sales and marketing plans for VisitHattiesburg through enhanced communication both online and in person.
- Host relevant guest speakers at association meetings to provide continuing education to members.
- Explore ways to partner together to cooperatively market Hattiesburg to potential visitors.
- Create a GroupMe or some other group text message service to communicate with hoteliers.
- Provide industry-driven training to members including crisis training, hospitality training and other topics requested by members.



## HIGHLIGHTS

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Most Visited  
City in MS

**41** Properties, including  
hotels and bed &  
breakfasts

**3,051** Hotel Rooms

**Three** New Additions:  
Hotel Indigo  
Holiday Inn  
DoubleTree

The **District at Midtown**  
mixed-use property opened  
in June 2018 across from USM  
and includes hotel, dining, and  
recreation.

# VISITHBURG IN THE MEDIA

VisitHBURG has been featured in numerous publications throughout the last year. Here is a glimpse of the magazine coverage that has reached Mississippi leaders in economic development, business, and tourism. Other coverage includes area and regional newspapers, radio, and television.

## VisitHATTIESBURG

### Tourism Team Promotes **Craft Your Own Adventure**



VisitHBURG.org Home Page

An innovative and artistic hub of the Gulf South, Hattiesburg has emerged as a premier visitor destination with an impressive sense of place for business and leisure travelers. The city is rapidly becoming an event, history, live music, outdoor attraction and culinary destination for millennials and baby boomers. During the last year, the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission (VisitHATTIESBURG) has successfully executed a re-branding of Hattiesburg, focusing on this edgy, welcoming, and diverse culture.

During 2017, the VisitHBURG team fully revamped its entire online presence, using the latest marketing trends and digital platforms to modernize and streamline its brand. The most notable success of this plan was a complete overhaul of its traditional website (VisitHBURG.org) into a virtual visitors center. Featuring local events, attractions, restaurants, hotels, blogs, and themed itineraries, the site was designed specifically with travelers in mind, ensuring ease of access on mobile devices. Additionally, the team increased its social media engagement, on Facebook and Instagram with generated content.



Partnerships strengthen the team's reach and professionally important focus on the most critical destination to keep our hotels filled with both business and leisure travelers," Dorsey said.

## AREA DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP MAGAZINE COVER STORY AND FEATURE

MAY 2018

VisitHBURG.org Blog Preview

Area Development Partnership | Greater Hattiesburg, MS | April - June 2018

# THE NAVIGATOR

Tourism Promotes **Craft Your Own Adventure**

ADP AREA DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

"Destination marketing is a highly competitive industry, and our HBURG team is focused on strengthening and expanding our sales and marketing efforts to best grow Hattiesburg's tourism economy," Marlo Dorsey, executive director of VisitHATTIESBURG, said.

VisitHBURG also created a two-minute video that authentically showcases the city's assets, including its culinary scene, music, outdoor recreation, attractions, meeting venues, and hotels. The video promotes Hattiesburg to visitors in targeted markets of surrounding states.

### VISITOR SERVICES

In addition to VisitHATTIESBURG's digital campaign, the organization upgraded its informational collateral for consistent, vivid presentation at tradeshows, welcome centers, and locally to inform visitors and residents about HBURG.

With so many offerings in Hattiesburg from Downtown to Midtown to West HBURG, VisitHBURG neatly packaged these assets in its new sales kit for conferences, tournaments, and large-scale visitor events.

To attract more group tours and travel writers, the team created a portfolio of amenities offered, including a listing of red carpet services, eight HBURG hotspots, top five reasons to bring a group to Hattiesburg, and four themed itineraries, with more being developed.

VisitHBURG HUB CITY 2018 Sales Kit - Group Tour Profile

Press releases and other news stories can be found online at [VisitHBURG.org/newsroom](http://VisitHBURG.org/newsroom).

TRAVEL & ADVENTURE  
Talk of the Town

marlo dorsey:  
visit hattiesburg

As executive director of VisitHATTIESBURG, Marlo Dorsey is promoting the Hattiesburg community as a destination for tourism and business travel—and the city is experiencing record numbers of visitors from around the United States and the world.

Thanks to tourism efforts and the city's ever-expanding list of attractions and accommodations, Hattiesburg ranks as the third most visited city in Mississippi. In 2017, 1.8 million visitors came to Hattiesburg, making an economic impact of nearly \$276 million within the community.

"From baby boomers to millennials and everyone in between, Hattiesburg has visitors from every region of the United States daily," says Marlo.

"Hattiesburg is well-established as Mississippi's Hub City, making it a natural melting pot for creativity and diversity," she adds. "Hattiesburg attracts adventurers of all types because of its welcoming and artistic vibe. And not only is Hattiesburg home to an award-winning zoo, two military museums, a thriving downtown, and two universities, it also has a bustling live music and craft brewery scene. And it's full of unique retailers, history, and art."

Additionally, being home to William Carey University and the University of Southern Mississippi, the city attracts thousands of visitors through sporting events, student recruitment, cultural performances, and other events. "Over the last year," Marlo adds, "VisitHATTIESBURG has partnered with the university to create a vibrant live-music and culinary scenes and its first-class accommodations," she explains. "As a result, we have enjoyed double-digit hotel growth through an increase in overnight travel."

The success of this marketing campaign then led the VisitHATTIESBURG team to create and promote from uniquely themed tourist itineraries, where visitors can choose a package based on their interests. These include Art & Architecture, Happy-Go-Lucky, Stars & Stripes, and Zoo, Brew & Bites. "Day trips and weekend getaways to Hattiesburg have never been easier," she adds.

With a professional background in marketing, development, and tourism, Marlo understands the role partnerships play in a community's success. "Today's successful communities are those with engaged leaders and citizens that share a clear vision for economic growth and sustainability, along with a commitment to always enhance its quality of life," she says.

"When we have solid and authentic working relationships with our board members, volunteers, and stakeholders, we all benefit by being able to raise our level of offerings and expertise," she adds. "This collective and cooperative approach to destination building gives us a competitive advantage as a tourism market."

Marlo's two children are happy to put words like "Hattiesburg" in their vocabularies. "I'm a team for the city," she says. "I'm personally committed to living and working in a city that has the vision to become a premier city of the South." —Marlo

## MISSISSIPPI MAGAZINE

### "TALK OF THE TOWN" FEATURE

JUNE 2018

Mississippi BUSINESS JOURNAL

Thrive @ CV Success in the West A Conversation with Heather SPEAKERSHIP AVAILABLE FOR NOV

NEWS - OPINION - EVENTS - LISTS - ADVERTISE - STORE - PEOPLE

Home » MJB FEATURE » Beacon of Tourism: Hattiesburg the third most visited city in Mississippi



### Beacon of Tourism: Hattiesburg the third most visited city in Mississippi

Posted by: For the MJB in MJB FEATURE, Tourism March 30, 2018

By JULIA MILLER

When it comes to becoming a beacon of tourism, a lot of factors have to mix just right. Marlo Dorsey, who took over the reins at VisitHATTIESBURG last fall, said all those elements have come together in the Hub City to create one of the fastest growing tourism markets in the state.

"We have a vibrant live-music and culinary scenes and its first-class accommodations," she explains. "As a result, we have enjoyed double-digit hotel growth through an increase in overnight travel."

## MISSISSIPPI BUSINESS JOURNAL

MARCH 2018

# HBURG VISION 2020

The team at VisitHATTIESBURG implemented a short-term **strategic plan** to focus on four core areas to fulfill the mission of the organization. Below is a glimpse of the strategic plan developed. See appendix for full plan, complete with goals and tactics.

## WE ARE VISITHATTIESBURG

### OUR MISSION

To actively position Hattiesburg as a year-round premier leisure and business destination in the Gulf South.

### OUR VISION

To ignite tourism economic growth in Hattiesburg through strategic vision and collaborative leadership while enhancing local quality of life.

### OUR VALUES

The VisitHATTIESBURG team strives to be efficient, productive and professional with a commitment to hospitality excellence and attention to detail while always keeping VisitHATTIESBURG’s mission top of mind.

## OUR FOCUS AREAS



**GROW TOURISM’S  
ECONOMIC IMPACT IN HBURG**



**COMMUNICATE  
AND AMPLIFY THE HBURG STORY**



**STRENGTHEN  
PARTNER NETWORK & COLLABORATION**



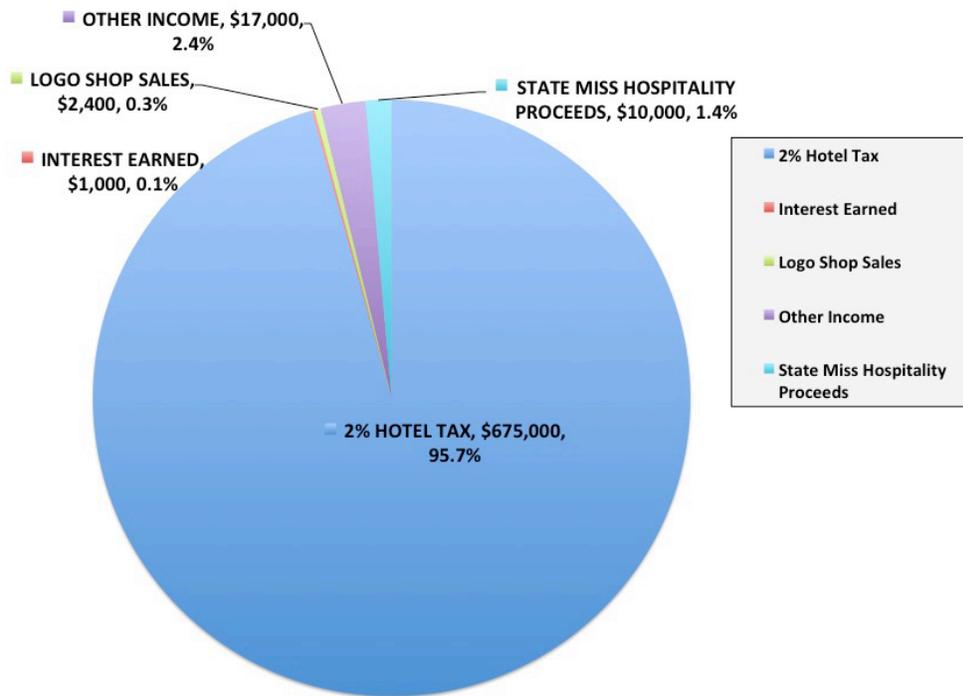
**PRIORITIZE PLACEMAKING  
AND ENHANCE THE HBURG EXPERIENCE**



# FY2018 BUDGET



## VISITHATTIESBURG FY2018 PROJECTED INCOME



## VISITHATTIESBURG FY2018 EXPENSES

