

# CHAPTER FOUR

**A**t the 2005 summer meeting of the Southern Governors' Association (SGA), Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue announced that the primary initiative of his tenure as chair of the SGA involved promoting heritage tourism as a means to spur economic growth in Georgia and the other Southern states.<sup>1</sup>

With his Heritage Tourism Initiative, Governor Perdue chose to focus on and expand the link between tourism and economic development even beyond the usual mix of tourist attractions scattered across Georgia and other parts of the South. The initiative now includes such venues as agri-tourism, music history, film legacy, cities crucial to the civil rights movement, plantations, Spanish forts, Civil War battlefields and a host of other cultural and historic sites.

In Louisiana, even before Hurricane Katrina's devastating impact, Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu was focusing intensely on tapping his state's "multifaceted, deeply rooted, authentic and unique culture" as a source of "economic energy." In the

aftermath of Katrina, state officials led by the lieutenant governor are even more intent on making Louisiana's cultural economy the engine of its economic and social rebirth.<sup>2</sup>

Both these public officials and a number of others across the South

realize the tremendous untapped economic potential of the cultural and heritage treasures within their borders and are actively seeking to market these venues as a means to attract tourists and tourist dollars. These policymakers are quickly realizing that cultural and heritage tourists not only spend more money than regular tourists, they also tour for a longer period of time.

In fact, at the national level, there is a growing body of evidence that not only is cultural and heritage tourism rapidly expanding and gaining widespread popularity, the spending patterns of this particular cohort of tourists are substantially larger than the spending patterns of regular tourists. According to the most recent information from the U.S. Department of Commerce and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, historic and cultural-associated travel increased by 13 percent from 192.4 million person-trips in 1996 to 216.8 million person-trips in 2002 compared to other travelers; similarly, cultural and heritage tourists spent more, \$623 versus \$457, compared to regular tour-

## CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM PROFILE

### Domestic

- » Eighty-one percent of the 146.4 million U.S. adults who took a trip of 50 miles or more away from home in the past year can be considered cultural and heritage tourists.
- » In contrast to other travelers, cultural and heritage tourists
  - » use a hotel, motel or B&B: 62 percent vs. 55 percent;
  - » are more likely to spend \$1,000: 19 percent vs. 12 percent; and
  - » travel longer: 5.2 nights vs. 3.4 nights.
- » The demographic profile of the cultural and heritage travel segment today is younger, wealthier, more educated and more technologically savvy compared to those surveyed in 1996.
- » Approximately 35.3 million adults indicated that a specific arts, cultural or heritage event or activity influenced their choice of destination.

### International

- » In 2004, there were 10.6 million overseas visitors who participated in cultural and heritage tourism activities in the United States.
- » The United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, France and Australia were the top five overseas markets interested in cultural and heritage tourism in the United States.
- » The average overseas tourist interested in cultural and heritage activities visits the United States for longer, over 19 nights vs. 16 nights for all overseas travelers.
- » More than 72 percent of overseas cultural and heritage tourists are here for leisure/vacation as one of the purposes of their visit compared to 62 percent for all overseas travelers.
- » Overseas cultural and heritage tourists are more willing to visit more than one state (41 percent) compared to only 30 percent for all overseas visitors.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 2005.

## Who Benefits from a Revitalized Downtown/Commercial District?

### Merchants

- Greater opportunity for growth and expansion
- Expanded customer base
- Less financial risk

### Property Owners

- Stable or higher rents
- Increased occupancy rates
- Improved marketability of property
- Higher property values

### Financial Institutions

- Expanded business customer base
- Expanded residential customer base
- Improved public image and goodwill
- Fulfillment of community reinvestment mandate

### Professionals and Service Businesses

- Ready-made customer base of district employees
- Location near government, banks, post offices, and other institutions
- Nearby amenities for clients and staff

### Chamber of Commerce

- Potential new member businesses
- Healthier overall business climate
- Potential partnerships on joint projects

### Residents

- Local accessibility to goods and services
- Opportunities for volunteerism and leadership development
- Preservation of community for future generations
- More employment opportunities
- Stronger tax base to support other community aspects (schools, parks, etc.)

### Local Government

- Increased sales and property tax base
- Protection of property values and infrastructure investment
- Reduced cost of services, such as police and fire protection
- Reduced pressure for sprawl development

### Community Partners (CDCs, BIDs, civic clubs, historical societies, historic preservation organizations, religious institutions, senior citizens, arts groups, etc.)

- Improved quality of life in the community
- New membership potential among new residents
- Achievement of common goals
- Preservation of community history

### Schools

- Youth involvement in civic projects
- Use of commercial district as "classroom" for school projects
- Potential employment and business opportunities
- More opportunities and activities for youths

### Businesses Outside the Commercial District

- Increased visitor traffic to the community
- Improved municipal services throughout the community
- Increased business from overall healthier economy
- Additional amenities for employees and clients

### Industry

- Improved quality of life makes recruiting and retaining employees easier

ists during the same time period.<sup>3</sup>

A close companion to the push toward marketing cultural heritage tourism as an economic driver is the movement to revitalize and renovate the downtown or traditional commercial districts of small towns and cities across America. While there are a number of groups active on this front, the Main Street Approach, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is one of the more important programs.<sup>4</sup> While Main Street's approach is community driven, it seeks to respond to the range of challenges confronting traditional business districts by fostering economic development within the context of historic preservation in ways appropriate to today's marketplace. It operates on the premise that a city's downtown or traditional commercial district remains the most visible indicator of a community's economic and social health.

Depending on its condition, this downtown and/or commercial business district will help or hinder a city's efforts to recruit new residents, businesses and industries, retirees and tourists while retaining those that already live in the city. In order to create lively, thriving downtown and commercial districts, the Main Street approach encourages forward-thinking economic development within the context of historic preservation so this community asset and legacy can be passed on to future generations. Since the 1970s, Main Street has worked with cities and communities across the country to revitalize and restore the downtown and commercial

business districts of cities that had fallen into disrepair, become crime-ridden and economically devastated.

As indicated earlier, officials and policymakers in several SLC states are intent on attracting an increasing number of cultural and heritage tourists to their borders. Georgia Governor Perdue and Louisiana Lieutenant Governor Landrieu are two such officials, and while their particular approaches are different, their objectives remain the same. It should be mentioned that Louisiana's current efforts to leverage the cultural economy as a means to spur economic growth stand as one of the most comprehensive, if not in the South, in the entire nation. Virginia's Heritage Musical Trail, The Crooked Road, spurred by the city of Galax, Virginia, is another example where local musicians and instrument makers who work in the area are seeking to foster economic growth by publicizing the unique talents of this corner of southwest Virginia. In a promotional effort to attract interest, a group of musicians and instrument makers from the Crooked Road will travel to Scotland this year to promote the region's heritage and culture internationally.<sup>5</sup>

## Heritage and Cultural Tourism in Georgia

There are two aspects to this push to promote heritage and cultural tourism in Georgia. One approach involves the state of Georgia's efforts on its own and the other approach involves Governor Perdue's efforts during his tenure as the chair of the Southern Governors' Association to collectively market the South's cultural and heritage attractions under the banner *Soul of the South: Our Heritage, Our Hospitality, Our Hometowns*.

The state of Georgia's independent efforts were launched in spring 2005 at a conference hosted on heritage tourism by the Georgia Trust and the Historic Preservation Division of the state's Department of Natural Resources. The message emerging from the conference was that Georgia tourism officials would seek to lure tourists, primarily baby boomers, to the state's plantations, Civil War battlefields and

other venues of heritage tourism.<sup>6</sup> According to information presented at the conference to the 400 preservation specialists from around the state, baby boomers are forecasted to spend a great deal of time in their retirement years touring cultural and heritage sites and the sooner states and localities prepare for this brand of tourist, the greater the economic benefits that will flow to their coffers. In this connection, the discussion revolved around creating a series of trails that would be of interest to different groups of cultural and heritage tourists and marketing these sites as a package. In Texas, a successful program known as Texas Trails does just this and Georgia plans to establish and collectively market these different trails as a package. Professionals at the conference noted that given the significant economic benefits of attracting more cultural and heritage tourists, the \$25 billion tourism industry in Georgia could be expected to expand even further.

The second aspect to this effort by Governor Perdue to deploy cultural heritage tourism in an effort to foster economic growth involved his role as chair of the Southern Governors' Association (2004-05).<sup>7</sup> As noted earlier, Governor Perdue's signature initiative during his tenure as chair was to launch the Heritage Tourism Initiative, an effort which seeks to increase revenues by capitalizing on the region's rich cultural legacy. Unlike the state effort, this initiative is a multistate one and initially will result in an Internet travel site for tourists interested in music in locations across the South. Specifically, this Website will be designed to encourage music enthusiasts to book vacations in Southern states, and visitors to this free site will be able to select vacation planning ideas based on musical genres such as country, jazz, blues or bluegrass. Several Southern governors (Governor Bredesden of Tennessee and Governor Huckabee of Arkansas, for instance) were enthusiastic supporters of Governor Perdue's vision of this multistate push

to attract more cultural and heritage tourists. According to tourism professionals working on the Website, in addition to music, the site will include other cultural tourism themes such as Southern architecture, Civil War his-

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tory, folk art, Southern cuisine, Black history and other sites of cultural interest. The site will also allow visitors to make hotel and rental car reservations. In an effort to capture the essence of the South on the Website, even though corporate sponsors will pay to advertise on it, state tourism directors, arts councils, cultural heritage and preservation officials and other state officials will be responsible for supplying the content so that the individual states' travel and tourism goals and initiatives are secured.

### Louisiana Leveraging the Cultural Economy

Even before Hurricane Katrina's devastating blow, high-level public officials in Louisiana, led by Lieutenant Governor Landrieu, were intent on leveraging their state's impressive collection of cultural attributes to promote broad-based, statewide economic development. While elements of this strategy had been percolating in state policy circles for decades, *Louisiana: Vision 2020*, the state's master economic development plan released a few years ago, prioritized tourism and entertainment (specifically music and film) as one of four core state industries (along with education, entrepreneurship and technology) that would be crucial in Louisiana's economic advancement in the upcoming decades.

However, a few weeks before Hurricane Katrina came ashore in Louisiana, the state's Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (and several other sponsoring agencies), at the prompting of Lieutenant Governor Landrieu, released an in-depth report entitled *Louisiana: Where Culture Means Business*, which provided background information on the state's unique cultural attributes and laid out a strategy for the state to utilize these attributes in promoting economic growth and opportunities. Specifically, the report defined Louisiana's cultural economy as "the people, enterprises, and communities that transform cultural skills, knowledge, and ideas into

economically productive goods, services and places."<sup>8</sup> In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana officials maintain that they are more convinced than ever that focusing on the state's cultural economic attributes will be an important mechanism to revive economic growth and economic opportunities across the state.

In explaining its rationale for the in-depth analysis on developing a coherent strategy for utilizing Louisiana's cultural attributes, the 2005 report notes that, up to that point, there had not been an attempt to analyze the development potential of the state's entire cultural economy. In order to fill this breach, the report sought to demonstrate, in detail, how the state's cultural attributes supported "many related industries, including tourism" and how it resulted "in improving the quality of life in urban and rural areas and in generating employment in music, film, video as well as industries such as culinary arts, preservation construction, architecture and interior design, publishing and web-related design."<sup>9</sup> The report stressed that only through a comprehensive review of the many aspects of its cultural attributes can Louisiana understand and develop the full economic potential of its entire cultural economy. The report adopted as a starting point the thesis that culture generates economic value and that for-

mulating a framework or strategic plan to take advantage of the state's cultural attributes will be a valuable pillar of a healthy, diversified Louisiana economy. The report is quick to point out that it is "not an economic impact statement but a framework for action."

In developing a framework to incorporate as many elements of Louisiana's cultural economy into a strategic plan of action, the report lists the following six broad categories.

### Culinary Arts

Food and culinary arts rank as one of the most vibrant, largest and diverse industries within the state's impressive cultural economy, a sector that has reached the heights of national and international stardom with its impressive roster of chefs and restaurants. The impetus for this flourishing sector, as it is for all the other industries within the cultural economy, involves the profoundly entrenched cultural and ethnic traditions of the many communities that compose Louisiana. Communities that trace their origins to the French, English, Italian, Creole, Native American, African, German and Acadian all blend together to influence what is widely known as Louisiana, New Orleans, Cajun, and Creole cuisine. These diverse ethnic backgrounds have been fused over the centuries to create such contemporary culinary luminaries as Paul Prudhomme and Emeril Lagasse, such well-known restaurants as Commander's Palace and Galatoire among others, such renowned dishes as gumbo, po' boys, etouffee and such recognized ingredients as Tabasco sauce from Avery Island in Louisiana.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, there were reports that nearly 10 percent of the total New Orleans labor force, about 55,000 people, worked in the city's estimated 3,400 restaurants; the restaurant industry in the state was estimated to generate about \$5.2 billion annually and functioned as the largest private employer in the state.<sup>10</sup>

### Entertainment

Alongside the culinary arts, the 'entertainment cluster' remains Louisiana's most famed cultural attribute, and



Southern Folk Artist. Photo courtesy David Batley, Southern Arts Federation.

the state is making a concerted effort to promote this cluster as an economic development priority. Included in the entertainment cluster are broadcasting, film, music, live entertainment, tourism and sports. While the state recently has developed a national reputation for some of these industries, Louisiana's strength in the music industry remains unparalleled. In particular, New Orleans' reputation as the cradle of jazz since the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its growing popularity in various incarnations in subsequent decades is nationally and internationally known. More recently, since the passage of the 2002 Louisiana Motion Picture Incentive Program, more than \$900 million has flowed to the state in new production with such blockbuster movies as *Ray*. (As a side note, the Louisiana House of Representatives was featured prominently in *Ray*.)

### Preservation

Since about the 1930s, Louisiana has been a leader in the nation's preservation movement when plans that would have razed the French Quarter were blocked. The state's historic and preservation industries focus on

the restoration and redevelopment of historic structures, historic districts and historic styles that reflect the multivariied cultures of Louisiana at various stages in its history. Not only is Louisiana endowed with one of the largest inventories of buildings eligible to be placed on the National Register, the state also has ranked in the top five states for allocating funds toward the restoration of historic properties in the past decade. Many of the professionals (architects, landscape architects, interior designers, antique dealers) included in this category have national reputations burnished by their fine work in and outside the state.

### Visual Arts and Crafts

Louisiana's rich folk art and craft tradition that has thrived for decades recently has been complemented by a rapidly expanding contemporary arts scene. In addition, the state's visual arts industry, including fine arts, folk art, contemporary crafts and folk crafts has been gaining momentum recently, assisted by a collection of art galleries that are much more than retail establishments and actually are intermediaries in a national art market. A number

of artists' studios have cropped up in the Marigny/Bywater area (near the wharves) in New Orleans while several additional Louisiana cities (Shreveport, Alexandria, Jennings and Covington) maintain active visual arts and crafts scenes.

### **Literary Arts and Humanities**

The state's rich literary tradition is anchored by a number of festivals. Most importantly, the Tennessee Williams Festival and the Words and Music Literary Festival (organized by the William Faulkner Society) generate a great deal of positive media coverage and millions of dollars in economic activity. Furthermore, this category includes a broad collection of individual writers and editors, newspaper and periodical publishing, book publishing and related activities in the humanities. The industry also includes libraries and bookstores which, once again, are more than retail distribution outlets and serve as sites where those immersed in the state's literary culture convene for various events, discussions and readings.

### **Design**

Recognized in the report as the "weakest segment of the cultural economy" in Louisiana, despite a large artistic labor pool, this category includes the printing and graphic companies that produce creative work in both the print and digital media for the Louisiana business and non-business communities. Also included is the advertising industry with its significant number of artists and writers.

In deconstructing the potential of these six elements of the state's cultural economy and then formulating an action plan that would take advantage of Louisiana's strengths in these spheres to propel economic growth, the report records that the state's cultural enterprises are a major employment engine generating nearly 144,000 direct jobs and accounting for 7.6 percent of Louisiana's total employment. In fact, the number of direct jobs actually exceeds the number of jobs in the state's tourism industry (126,000), a reflection of the cultural economy's silent reach into the state's economic infrastruc-

ture. Then, the report stressed that the culture-related economy also is a fast growing sector in the state, expanding by 6.3 percent compared to the state's overall 2.3 percent growth rate between 1998 and 2002. The report also notes that the state's cultural economy is a huge force in the state's tourism and travel industry; similarly, the cultural economy's role in the state's higher education system also is stressed.

Finally, in its detailed listing of strategic initiatives to advance the cultural economy, the report stresses the principles of giving voice to a vision that promotes culture as a direct producer of economic wealth; investing locally in Louisiana's abundant cultural advantages to attract tourists, investors and businesses; and promoting an environment that all elements within Louisiana's cultural economy can convene, connect and collaborate to develop the social and networking links to function as an economic sector.