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## **Economic and Tourism Overview**

### ***Macon, Georgia***

***Submitted to:*** \_\_\_\_\_

**NewTown Macon, Inc.**

***Prepared by:*** \_\_\_\_\_

**LDR International, Inc.**

**February, 1997**

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## ***1.0 Introduction***

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Macon, Georgia is a city with extraordinary charm, heritage resources, location and natural assets. It has seven historic districts and a treasure trove of preserved buildings having been spared from destruction during the Civil War. Its legacy from the past is matched by its opportunity for the future. The city is poised to benefit economically, socially and culturally from changes now underway to prepare the community for the Twenty-first Century.

Macon is directing resources at redeveloping its downtown as a centerpiece for the city and region. Although growth has been constrained in recent years, the city has the potential for significant investment, development and enrichment from a number of circumstances. It is the fourth largest city in Georgia, a major regional medical center and the home to renowned educational institutions.

The city's location is a great asset. It is just an hour's drive from Atlanta. It is located along major interstate transportation routes: I-16 from Atlanta to Savannah and I-75 a major north-south route from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to the tip of Florida, passing through Detroit, Cincinnati and Atlanta. It is a major tourism route from the Mid-West. It is served by Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport to the north and Macon's Wilson Municipal Airport.

The Ocmulgee River flows through the town, providing opportunities for recreation, significant overlook sites, natural resources and access to adjacent areas of ancient Native American settlements.

As Macon focuses on recreating its downtown, a number of opportunities will develop. What can happen in Macon's downtown will be determined by the public and private investments made, by the economic opportunity and by the coordinated actions of the community. Tourism is one of those economic opportunities. This report will provide an overview of Macon's economy and of tourism.

Tourism is economic development. It provides jobs and income; it offers an introduction into the community for those who might live or invest there; and it supplements the market for activities, facilities and venues that can enrich the lives of residents. Tourism can increase the Macon market for downtown businesses and attractions. This report presents some findings and recommendations for capturing the tourism potential to support downtown revitalization.

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## 2.0 Economic Overview

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Although Georgia as a whole, and the Atlanta area in particular, have grown rapidly in recent years, Macon and Bibb County have been constrained. Population and employment growth have been slow and are projected to remain slow in the near future. There has actually been an outmigration of population in recent years, although it has apparently abated. The market to support new investment in downtown will need support from tourism.

**Population and Employment --** Like many communities, changes and shifts in the national and world economy have impacted Macon. The textile industry has been lost, and manufacturing has been reduced and replaced by a service oriented economy. Dependency upon tobacco and the aero-space industry has been problematic. It has been suggested that Macon has not been anxious to change and recruit newer industries. The result has been a stagnant and/or slow growth rate although the community is adjacent to Atlanta, one of the nation's fastest growing areas.

- With respect to population, between 1980 and 1995, Georgia population grew 32 percent, the Macon MSA 14 percent and Macon-Bibb County, three percent as shown in *Table 1*.
- Population projections, shown on *Table 2*, indicate a similar pattern. Between 1995 and 2010, Georgia population is projected to grow 20 percent; the Macon MSA, 9 percent and Macon-Bibb County, three percent.
- Although unemployment remains low, employment growth has been slow, as well. *Table 3* shows the civilian labor force and employment for the MSA and Bibb County. Between 1990 and 1995, employment growth was almost stagnate although the unemployment rate was about 5 percent throughout the period.
- *Table 4* shows the distribution of wage and salary employment (excluding self-employed and military) for the MSA and Bibb County for 1995. It illustrates the current structure of the economy and the heavy dependence upon government, the lesser significance of manufacturing, and the importance of trade and services. Although Macon-Bibb County has about 50 percent of the population in the MSA, it has 69 percent of employment. Macon-Bibb County is an

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important job center for the area. In the MSA, 25 percent of employment is government, without including the military.

- *Table 5* shows employment by sector (including self-employed and military) for the larger region around Macon - Middle Georgia, an 11 county region defined by the state. In this larger region, employment declined across all sectors of the economy between 1990 and 1995.
- The projections for employment growth in 1996, from the University of Georgia, ranked the Macon MSA as second to last, at about 57 percent of the state rate.

*Projected Employment Growth, 1996*

<i>Georgia</i>	<i>3.0 %</i>
<i>Atlanta MSA</i>	<i>3.7 %</i>
<i>Athens MSA</i>	<i>3.0 %</i>
<i>Savannah MSA</i>	<i>2.3 %</i>
<i>Columbus MSA</i>	<i>2.2 %</i>
<i>Albany MSA</i>	<i>2.3 %</i>
<i>Macon MSA</i>	<i>1.7 %</i>
<i>Augusta MSA</i>	<i>0.8 %</i>

**Prospects for the Future --** The Macon area does have the foundation for a successful future and development. It has a diversified economy, a strategic location and a significant resource with the military.

- Macon is a regional medical center, with 1,000 general acute beds and 200 psychiatric beds. The Mercer University Medical School adds to the complex making it a health center for 60 - 80 counties in Georgia, or about one-third of the state. The health care industry is a growth industry.
- Macon is an important higher education center with Mercer University, Wesleyan and Macon College.
- The Macon area has a major resource at the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center, including the Robins AFB, where there are some 21,300 personnel, both civilian and military. The center was not downsized during the recent military base realignments.

- The strategic location along major interstate highways and the nearness to Atlanta are advantages for the community, both for attracting investment and tourists.
- Tourism offers a significant opportunity to be developed and provide support for an enhanced downtown. Tourism employment has been growing at about twice the rate of all employment in the U.S. Tourism spending supports services and activities that enhance the entire community. Tourism can contribute to the quality of life in Macon by adding to the market for entertainment, restaurants, attractions, shopping and recreation that can be enjoyed by both residents and visitors.

**The Multiplicity of Organizations** -- One of the factors that can diminish future opportunities for the Macon area is the multiplicity of organizations and governmental agencies. The complexity of organizations and agencies makes it difficult to coordinate, cooperate, focus responsibility and achieve results. The problem is not unique to Macon. A state commission, *Georgia Futures Communities Commission*, established in 1995, has pointed out that the system of local government is decentralized, fragmented, inefficient and a barrier to growth and change.

- Regional coordination is difficult because of the many different regions established for the area, often with overlapping responsibilities and confused identities.

<i>Middle Georgia Regional Development Center</i>	<i>11 counties</i>
<i>Historic Heartland (Tourism Region)</i>	<i>20 counties</i>
<i>Council of Economic Development Organizations</i>	<i>20 counties</i>
<i>CEDO Region 6</i>	
<i>Metropolitan Statistical Area/Labor Market Area</i>	<i>5 counties</i>

- *The Bibb County Efficiency Committee*, in 1996, recommended a total reorganization and consolidation of Macon and Bibb County to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness.

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- There are several economic development organizations which, although each was established for specific purposes, create confusion and make it difficult to assign responsibility for new developments and change. These include:

*The Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce  
Development Authority of Bibb County  
Macon-Bibb County Industrial Development Authority  
Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority  
Macon Economic Development Commission  
Downtown Council*

- It is within this difficult structure that developing tourism must occur. The existing principal tourism organization, the Macon-Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau, has only limited authority and responsibility, at this time.

**Table 1: Population Trends 1980, 1990, 1995  
Georgia, Macon MSA, Macon-Bibb County**

	1980	1990	1995	Change 1980 - 1995
Georgia	5,452,989	6,478,149	7,200,882	31.8%
Macon MSA	272,945	291,079	309,756	13.5%
Macon-Bibb County	150,256	150,137	155,066	3.2%
Percent of Georgia	2.8%	2.3%	2.1%	

Source: U.S. Census  
LDR International, Inc.



**Table 2: Population Projections 2000, 2005, 2010  
Georgia, Macon MSA, Macon-Bibb County**

	1995	2000	2005	2010	Change 1995-2010
Georgia	7,200,882	7,703,202	8,137,471	8,663,057	20.3%
Macon MSA	309,756	319,452	329,015	336,880	8.8%
Macon-Bibb County	155,066	156,930	158,499	160,084	3.2%
Percent of Georgia	2.1%	2.0%	1.9%	1.8%	--

Source: US Census  
Middle Georgia RDC  
LDR International, Inc.

**Table 3: Resident Civilian Labor Force: 1990, 1995  
Georgia, Macon MSA, Macon-Bibb County**

	Macon MSA		Bibb County	
	1990	1995	1990	1995
Labor Force	136,818	141,960	69,708	70,665
Employment	130,264	134,833	66,131	66,887
Unemployed	6,584	7,127	3,577	3,776
Rate	4.8%	5.0%	5.1%	5.3%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor  
LDR International, Inc.

Data are non-agricultural wage and salary and self-employed

**Table 4: Wage & Salary Employment: 1995  
Georgia, Macon MSA, Macon-Bibb County**

	Macon MSA		Macon-Bibb County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, Mining	2,564	1.9%	459	0.5%
Construction	5,551	4.1	3,592	4.3
Manufacturing	19,666	14.4	13,427	15.9
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	5,003	3.7	3,980	4.7
Wholesale Trade	5,327	3.9	4,370	5.2
Retail Trade	27,789	20.4	17,790	21.1
F.I.R.E.	7,822	5.7	6,140	7.3
Services	28,594	21.0	20,492	24.3
Government	34,069	25.0	14,008	16.6
<i>Federal</i>	13,014	9.5	1,425	1.7
<i>Local</i>	16,887	12.4	10,009	11.9
<i>State</i>	4,168	3.1	2,574	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>136,385</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>84,258</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Georgia Department of Labor  
LDR International, Inc.

Wage and salary employment excludes military and self-employment.

**Table 5: Employment by Sector: 1990, 1995  
Middle Georgia and Bibb County**

Sector	1990		1995	
	Middle Georgia	Bibb County	Middle Georgia	Bibb County
Farmers	3,278	204	2,790	173
Ag. Services	1,466	492	1,229	426
Mining	1,666	60	1,420	83
Construction	9,415	4,808	7,778	3,951
Manufacturing	29,044	13,367	28,849	13,110
Trans, Comm, Utilities	8,007	4,807	7,644	4,572
Wholesale Trade	7,761	6,053	7,689	6,208
Retail Trade	33,252	17,986	31,493	17,149
F.I.R.E.	13,127	8,688	12,793	8,688
Services	44,176	26,300	41,793	25,390
Government	53,941	13,040	50,714	14,731
<i>Federal Civilian</i>	18,295	1,409	15,496	3,458
<i>Federal Military</i>	5,823	809	6,339	732
<i>Local, State</i>	29,823	10,822	28,879	10,541
<b>Total</b>	<b>205,133</b>	<b>95,805</b>	<b>194,192</b>	<b>94,481</b>

Source: Middle Georgia RDC  
LDR International, Inc.

Middle Georgia - 11 Counties:  
 Baldwin Monroe  
 Bibb Peach  
 Crawford Putnam  
 Houston Twiggs  
 Jasper Wilkinson  
 Jones

Data are wage and salary, self-employed and military.

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### 3.0 *Tourism Assessment*

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Tourism is emerging as a very significant opportunity for Macon at this time. Macon itself has had, until recently, very limited tourism attractions. The Cherry Blossom Festival for ten days in March, has been the only major destination attraction. The tourism that has been present is largely business travel associated with the major employers and institutions (including medical), some limited meetings and pass-through traffic. However, there are major developments occurring which can increase the role tourism can play in Macon.

- The data on existing tourism in Macon show that there is a substantial market now, much of it business and interstate traffic. *Table 6* shows the growth in tourism expenditures in Georgia and Macon-Bibb County from 1990 to 1995. Georgia and Macon-Bibb County tourism expenditures have been growing at the annual rate of 5.7 percent. In 1995, Macon-Bibb County was estimated to have experienced tourism expenditures of \$ 270 million, a recovery of almost 15 percent from 1994 when the flood reduced tourism. Macon-Bibb County has about the same share of tourism as it has of population in Georgia.
- There are almost 4,000 hotel rooms in Macon-Bibb County, most clustered in three areas, one cluster along I-75; one along I-475; and a smaller cluster downtown. There are less than 500 hotel rooms in downtown. The shortage of rooms downtown is a problem.
- Macon has limited tourism within the city at this time. *Table 7* shows attraction visitation in the area in 1995. The Cherry Blossom Festival reporting 400,000 - 500,000 attendees, is the single significant attraction. (And this probably reflects multiple visits by the same people.) The I-75 Welcome Center in 1995 had 1,031,500 visitors, however, most are just stopping through. The total attendance (in delegate days) at conferences and meetings, at all venues including hotels, was 420,700. Most of the other attractions have limited visitation and much of that is school children and local residents.
- With respect to group tour traffic, the Macon-Bibb County C.V.B. reported 725 coaches in 1995, with 225 (31 percent) coming during March and the Cherry Blossom Festival.

- There are two major tourism attractions outside of Macon, which draw significant numbers of tourists: the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter in Perry and the Air Museum at Robins AFB. Each of these draw visitors from throughout the country.
- Although Macon has outstanding historic districts and architecture, it has not become a major heritage destination like Savannah and Charleston. The several historic attractions draw limited visitors at this time.
- The major marketing for the area is performed by the Macon-Bibb County C.V.B., which had a 1995-96 budget of \$ 1.2 million, almost entirely funded by shares of a 6 percent hotel room tax in both the city and county. Its 1995-96 budget was distributed as follows:

*Macon-Bibb County C.V.B. 1995/96 Budget of \$ 1.2 million:*

<i>Salaries, operations</i>	46.0 %
<i>Welcome centers</i>	15.7 %
<i>Brochures, general ads</i>	9.0 %
<i>Group, meeting marketing</i>	17.7 %
<i>Sidney Tours</i>	10.4 %
<i>Other</i>	1.2 %

- Until recently, the convention and meeting market has been limited. *Table 8* shows the meetings tracked by the C.V.B. for 1995 (held both at the Coliseum and in hotels). Although Macon is centrally located and convenient to Atlanta, it has not, in the past, attracted a strong meeting market. As shown, 63 percent of delegate days were from sports events and religious meetings. These are reportedly events that have a limited impact on the economy of the area.
- The most important tourists are those who stay overnight in motels and hotels in an area, as they represent about two-thirds of all tourism spending. Revenues at the hotels and motels in the Macon area have been growing. Between 1993 and 1996, as shown in *Table 9*, revenues increased almost 9 percent per year.
- The tourism market in Macon has a balanced season, with few monthly variations. A balanced seasonal market is easier to develop than one with sharp variations between the high seasons and the low seasons. *Table 10* shows seasonal use of hotels in Macon-Bibb County by tracking monthly room revenues, which shows very little monthly variation.

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- The State of Georgia, through the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, provides regional representatives, who coordinate activities within tourism regions. The Historic Heartland Region, of 20 counties, has tourism representatives who meet monthly. However, there is little direct marketing for the region by the state.

**Table 6: Tourism Expenditures: 1990-1995  
Georgia, Macon-Bibb County**

	<b>Georgia (billion)</b>	<b>Macon-Bibb Co. (million)</b>	<b>Percent of Georgia</b>
1990	\$10.33	\$204.7	2.0%
1991	10.36	244.7	2.4
1992	10.55	229.6	2.1
1993	11.46	252.3	2.2
1994	12.42	235.1	1.9
1995	13.56	269.7	2.0
<i>Change: 1990-1995</i>	31.3%	31.8%	--
<i>Annual Rate of Change</i>	5.6%	5.7%	--

Source: Davidson, Peterson. Georgia Department of Industry, Trade & Tourism  
LDR International, Inc.



**Table 7: Attraction Visitation: 1995  
Macon Area**

Georgia National Fairgrounds (Georgia National Fair)	747,400 (345,200)
Cherry Blossom Festival	400,000 - 500,000
Air Museum	400,000
Ocmulgee National Monument	114,500
Museum of Arts & Sciences	70,000 - 80,000
Harriet Tubman Museum	53,400
Hay House	44,000
Old Canonball House	10,300
Sidney Tours	8,500
Sidney Lanier Cottage	6,900
Welcome Centers	
I-75	1,031,500
Terminal Station	21,700
Macon Conferences, Meetings*	420,700

Source: Macon-Bibb County C.V.B.  
Various Attractions  
LDR International, Inc.

\* All conferences, meetings tracked by Macon-Bibb County C.V.B.; delegate days, see Table 8.

**Table 8: Delegate Meeting Days: 1995  
Macon-Bibb County**

Meeting Type	Number of Events	Delegate Days <sup>1</sup>	
		Number	Percent
Education	20	8,404	2.0%
Government	34	8,053	1.9%
Minority	12	12,388	2.9%
Medical	12	9,423	2.2%
Reunions	4	4,020	1.0%
Corporation	16	7,650	1.8%
State Association	30	7,718	1.8%
Social, Fraternal	21	42,543	10.1%
Sports	65	118,042	28.1%
Religion	24	146,650	34.9%
Trade Shows	12	55,813	13.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>420,704</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Macon-Bibb County C.V.B.  
LDR International, Inc

<sup>1</sup>A delegate x days in Macon = delegate days.

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**Table 9: Hotel Room Revenues (in thousands)  
FY 1993, 1995, 1996, Macon-Bibb County**

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<b>FY</b>	<b>Macon</b>	<b>Bibb County</b>	<b>Total</b>
1993	\$9,170.5	\$13,513.6	\$22,684.1
1995	10,226.3	15,492.1	25,718.4
1996	11,360.2	17,865.3	29,225.5

Source: Directors of Finance: Macon, Bibb County  
LDR International, Inc.  
Tax rate changed 1-01-94; FY '94 data not available.

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**Table 10: Seasonal Hotel Use: 1995**  
**Revenue by Month; Macon & Bibb County**

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<b>Month</b>	<b>Percent of Revenue</b>
January	7.8%
February	6.2
March	6.5
April	7.3
May	9.3
June	9.6
July	7.8
August	10.1
September	9.7
October	8.7
November	7.9
December	9.1
	100%

Source: Macon-Bibb County C.V.B.  
LDR International, Inc.

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## ***4.0 Tourism Opportunities***

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There are several opportunities to enhance tourism in the area, if appropriate strategies can be pursued. Tourism is a growing industry. A number of investments are already being made or planned for Macon. And the development of the plan for Macon's downtown is a major opportunity. Some of these opportunities are outlined below.

- The Atlanta MSA, with a population of more than 3.0 million can provide a major market for Macon. Atlanta is a major source of visitors to the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga. In addition, Macon could attract some state meetings now going to Atlanta.
- Interstate travel, particularly on I-75, represents a major opportunity. A survey done in 1988 showed that only 10 percent of the visitors to the Welcome Center on I-75 have a destination in Macon, although 28 percent were spending the night (not necessarily in a hotel or motel) and 16 percent were visiting attractions there. Traffic counts along I-475, I-75 and I-16 indicate that as many as 70,000-80,000 cars a day pass through in addition to those with a destination in the area.
- Robins AFB, with its military population, represents an opportunity. There is a market to attract from the military stationed there, from temporary trainees, from reservists, visitors and from military reunions. To date, few military events or meetings have been listed by the C.V.B..
- The Cherry Blossom Festival represents an opportunity, if more visitors could be attracted to stay overnight and see other attractions. A study done in 1990, assessing the festival, reported that only 8 percent of the estimated visitors stayed in hotels or motels. Data from hotel occupancies suggest that the marginal increase in March is from three to ten percent. The attractions being added to Macon may increase that impact
- The new tourism developments, including the Centreplex, Georgia Music Hall of Fame, Douglas Theatre and Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, will increase the tourism destination potential for Macon. Below are listed the tourism attractions that have recently been added or which are planning to develop in the Macon area:

*Georgia Music Hall of Fame  
Douglas Theatre  
Tubman Museum*

*New attraction (\$12.5 million)  
\$2.5 million renovation underway  
Expansion being planned*

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<i>Georgia Sports Hall of Fame</i>	<i>Being planned (\$8.3 million state)</i>
<i>Museum of Arts &amp; Sciences</i>	<i>\$3.3 million addition &amp; renovation</i>
<i>Coliseum/Centreplex</i>	<i>\$15.3 million addition</i>

*The Centreplex is the largest Georgia meeting facility outside of Atlanta.*

- The historic attractions, including the historic districts and the Native American settlements, are an opportunity given the increased interest in heritage tourism.
- There is interest in a Georgia State Museum, to replace the limited facility in Atlanta, to collect, present, exhibit and interpret Georgia's heritage, which could be appropriate for Macon.
- The Terminal Station and the Bibb Textile Mill properties could be developed for tourism related developments. Both are largely vacant, but architecturally significant structures appropriate for adaptive reuse.
- The Ocmulgee Greenway project could enhance the eco-tourism potential for the area, and complement the archaeological resources.
- The National Georgia Fairgrounds in Perry and the Air Museum at Robins AFB are significant opportunities. Visitors to the Fairgrounds could be attracted to Macon as could those to the Air Museum. Also, Macon could promote both to its own benefit to broaden the appeal of the area. There are limited hotels around Perry to support major convention meetings, and few attractions to interest those now coming to events (like RV rallies) there. The Air Museum is the second largest air museum in the U.S., second only to Wright-Patterson, with approximately 90 planes and helicopters.
- Macon's own strengths in medicine and education can contribute to a potential conference and meeting market.
- The Museum of Arts & Sciences might be persuaded to add a downtown satellite exhibit as a children's museum.

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## ***5.0 Tourism Issues***

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There are some major issues that must be addressed in any major strategy for tourism for Macon. These include the issues noted below.

- The limited hotel rooms downtown will limit the attractiveness of the Centreplex for multi-hotel conferences. An additional convention hotel would be desirable downtown. The Bibb Textile Mill is one opportunity for a hotel site. The Centreplex site is another.
- There is currently limited marketing of the area. Only the C.V.B., in addition to individual hotels, is doing any significant marketing. More resources need to be allocated to marketing and to reaching other markets. The small attractions and the National Park have no resources for marketing. The Georgia Music Hall of Fame has not yet undertaken a marketing program.
- The C.V.B. and Centreplex currently have no formal marketing agreement. The C.V.B. cannot "book" the facility and the Centreplex is reportedly not committed to bringing in outside meetings, which have the largest economic impact when they use hotel rooms for delegates. It is usual practice in many cities with convention centers to give the C.V.B. exclusive booking rights for any dates beyond 18 months. The C.V.B. then markets meetings. This is the time frame for planning most national and regional conventions. After 18 months, joint booking occurs. At the Centreplex, since the Coliseum is often a part of large meetings, regularly scheduled sporting events sometimes present a problem and will require careful balancing.
- Reportedly, the Centreplex is pressured to be more self-supporting, and make money, which is why it often books local events rather than keep the facility available to draw outside business into Macon. It's economic benefit should be measured by delegate business and hotel rooms booked rather than operating income alone.
- Regional cooperation in promoting tourism is limited. There is need for regional coordination and co-op marketing.
- The existing Visitor Center downtown in Terminal Station is not adequate, or well utilized. Macon needs an expanded centrally located visitor center which presents a convenient introduction (video

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or show) to Macon, easy access to attractions and a more inviting environment.

- The "Dreamtown" theme which has been used to market Macon is not popular and needs reconsideration as to its portrayal of Macon's image.
- The Georgia Music Hall of Fame needs to be completed, marketed and landscaped. The facility opened late and has not yet achieved its potential of 250,000-350,000 visitors per year.



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## 6.0 Recommendations

Tourism growth will not happen without a significant coordinated effort in the Macon area. It is an increasingly competitive industry, and there is no single activity, attraction or marketing plan that alone can solve the many concerns. Initially, a number of strategies should be developed to enhance Macon's tourism. Tourism includes understanding the characteristics and potential of the market (the visitors). It requires developing the product to serve tourists, including attractions and supporting services. And it entails organization, marketing and management. Below are initial recommendations for developing and enhancing tourism in the Macon area.

- **New facilities:** In addition to the attractions already being developed, a number of other tourism venues and support services are needed in the downtown, including:
  - Acquisition, development of Terminal Station;
  - Development of Bibb Textile Mill as a hotel, tourism site;
  - Development of an enhanced downtown Visitor Center; and
  - Development of a children's museum downtown (satellite of the Museum of Arts & Sciences).

*Recommendation #1: The planning for downtown development should address providing for new tourism-related attractions and venues.*

- **Improving access:** Macon's attractions are not compact, coherently related, promoted on-site, well-signed or easily accessed by visitors. Access and "way-finding" should be improved by programs, including:
  - Creating a downtown shuttle between the Centreplex, historic areas, major tourism attractions and downtown hotels;
  - Preparing a video introduction to Macon, its attractions and its history for use at the Visitor Center and hotels;
  - Improved signage throughout the area.

*Recommendation #2: The tourism related activities developed for Macon should include providing for public transportation around the area, signage and an introductory video or show about Macon and the area's tourism venues.*

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- **Strengthening marketing:** The marketing of tourism for Macon needs strengthening in several directions, including:
    - Establishing a marketing agreement between the C.V.B. and the Centreplex;
    - Establishing a consistent, and larger source of funding for marketing;
    - Focusing more on the Atlanta market for overnight visits;
    - Investing more money in marketing to individuals and independent leisure travelers;
    - Coordinating with regional facilities, especially the Air Museum and Georgia National Fairgrounds;
    - Developing a new marketing theme, image for Macon that is supported by the community.

*Recommendation #3: The Macon-Bibb County C.V.B., in cooperation with other organizations and tourism stakeholders, should seek additional support for marketing tourism and develop an enhanced marketing plan which includes regional and local attraction participation.*

- **Focusing responsibility:** Tourism, like other development activities in Macon, needs more focused responsibility. There are too many uncoordinated organizations and agencies involved in development in Macon. Responsibility for implementing improvements needs to be clarified. With the current organizational structure, few improvements in tourism can be implemented successfully.

*Recommendation #4: An organizational study of tourism-related organizations (and complementary development agencies) needs to be undertaken to clarify current roles, identify areas for improvement and to define responsibilities for developing, managing and marketing tourism product in the Macon area.*

- **Strategic plan for tourism:** Macon would benefit by having a coordinated tourism strategy that addresses all of the previous areas - new facilities, access, marketing and responsibility. The issues are complex, inter-related and of serious concern. Tourism is economic

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development. It involves use of public funds. It deserves a concentrated, cooperative and comprehensive strategy. It also requires accountability.

Catal's  
Committee

**Recommendation #5: The Macon area, through the leadership of the Macon-Bibb County C.V.B. and NewTown Macon, Inc., should undertake a comprehensive tourism development strategy which involves regional tourism stakeholders, addresses the issue of organization, establishes accountability and develops a detailed action plan for tourism product, promotion and management.**

Tourism development is essential to the success of downtown Macon. It is also an opportunity for economic development which is enhanced at the moment by the many activities and new attractions developing in downtown. Now is the time to focus on this important industry for the future.