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**Tourism Development International**

*Making Better Places – Engaging  
Communities with Government*



# *Making Better Places – Engaging Communities with Government*


- Making places better to live in and visit
- Tourism system: governments and the private sector come between the “host” and “guest”
- Getting local voices heard, respected and acted on still a challenge
- All players in the tourism distribution system coming together
- Opportunities in Ireland in rural areas to stem outward migration



# *Making Better Places – Engaging Communities with Government*

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## Case Study: Eastern South Carolina Heritage Region



# Eastern SC Heritage Region



# *Making Better Places – Engaging Communities with Government*

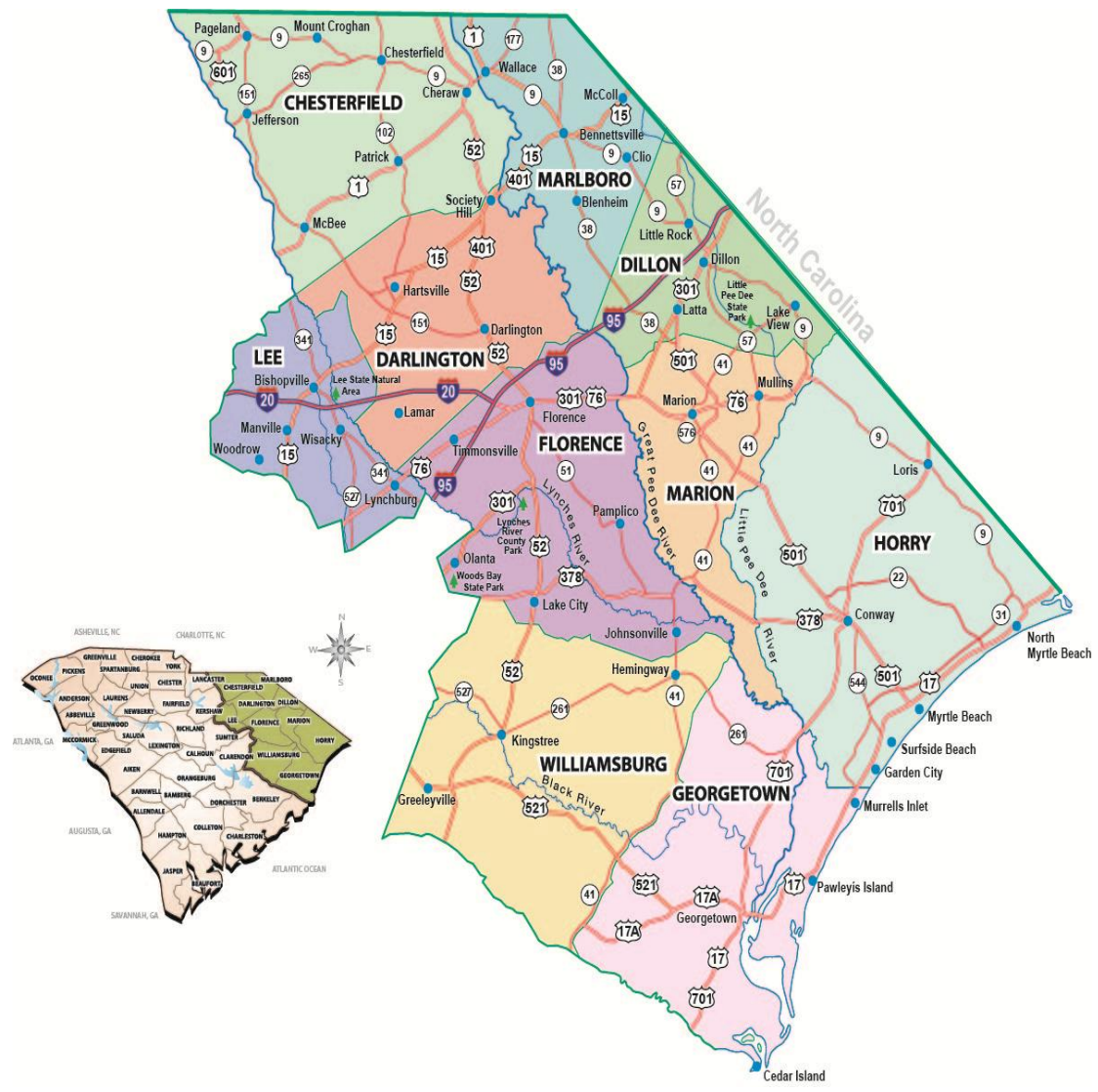
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- Pass through/transit region with two old-style tourist attractions and little else
- Florence: main city with an established Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Close to large visitor markets of the coast – the Grand Strand - Myrtle Beach 4.6mn tourists p.a.



# Grand Strand Region





# Tourism Development Plan 2009

Short term focus – tapping into existing visitor flows into and through the Region

Longer term focus – creating attractions and facilities to draw in visitor segments

Positive signs for the Region:

- Large existing transit visitor traffic, and proximity to coast
- Florence's growing significance as a regional center
- Increased Awareness and Interest in:
  1. Health - outdoors activities
  2. Environment – nature
  3. Where we came from – heritage, nostalgia





# Institutional Structures in 2009

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1. Multiplicity of organizations with overlapping roles
  - RTOs, local tourist offices,
  - Local administrations,
  - Alliances, committees, interest groups etc
2. Fragmentation, little joined up thinking or action – within counties, between neighbouring counties or other product development areas such as the Grand Strand



# Strategy and Objectives

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1. New “attractors” – problematic – perception as non-tourist area.
2. Strengthen Florence product to boost its role as hub/gateway to the ESCHR, and provide clusters of things to see and do.
3. Develop touring routes and excursions targeted at the Charlotte market, the I-95 traveller, and the coastal visitor respectively.
4. Rivers and parks - develop an extensive range of recreational facilities and activities.
5. Maximize visitor experience and spread economic and social benefits across the ESCHR population



# Focus

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## **Primary Focus**

The Florence Area to become the principal gateway into the ESCHR through the creation of a major new attraction, and the integration, expansion and improvement of its visitor product offerings

## **Supporting Focus**

The creation of clusters of attractions, facilities & activities across the ESCHR to attract touring & stopover visitors



# Programmes

## Four ESCHR Programmes

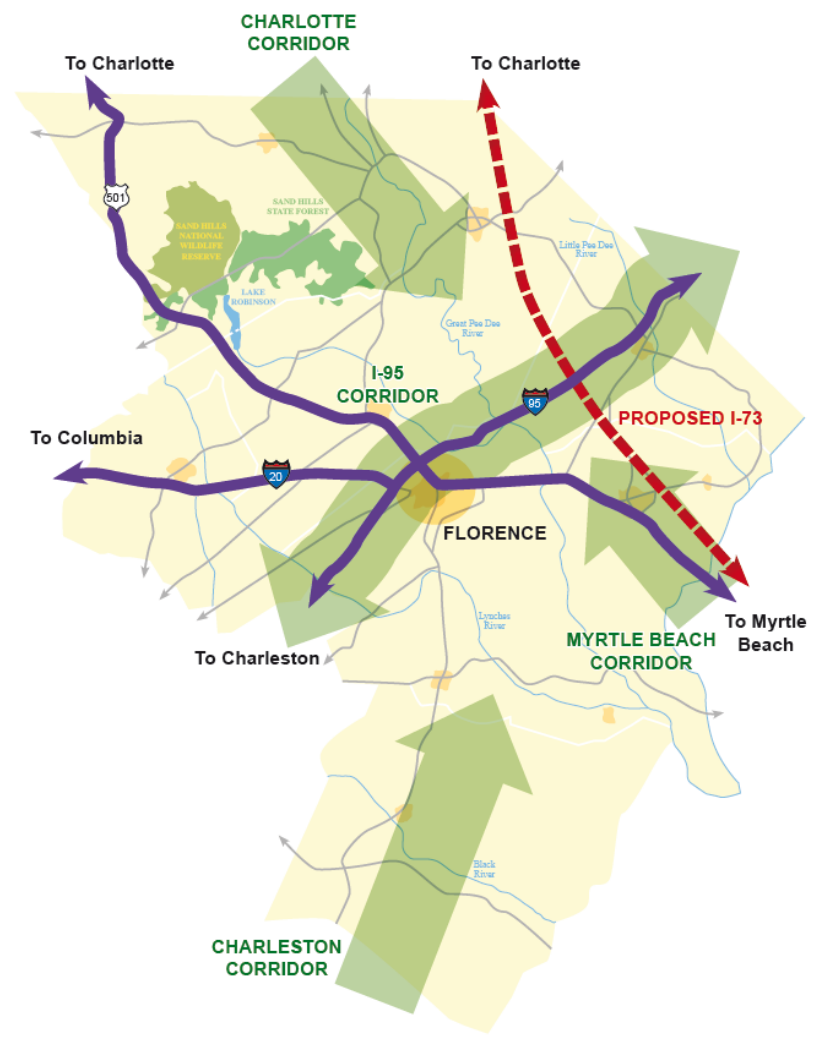
1. Strengthening and Integration of Florence Tourism Products
2. Existing Flagship Optimization
3. Rural and Nature Tourism
4. Heritage Towns

## Two Statewide Programs

5. Signage
6. Homestay

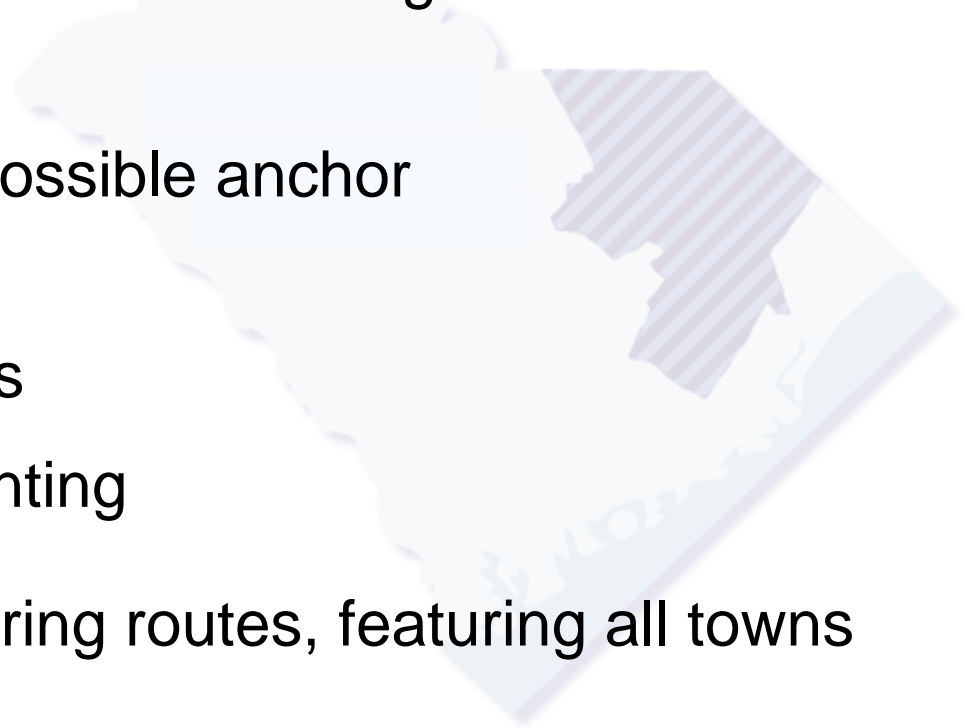


# Program 3 – Rural and Nature Activities and Trails

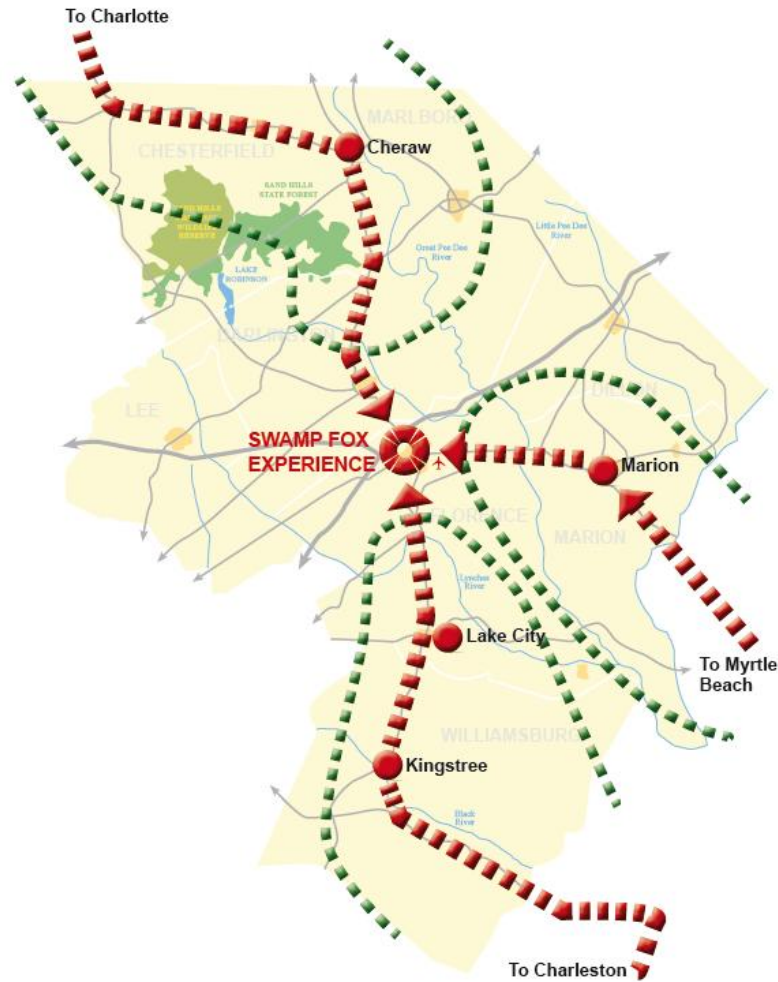


## Program 3 – Rural and Nature Activities and Trails

1. Reinforce touring route hubs – cotton, tobacco
2. National Bean Market Museum: hub for agricultural and artisanal trail
3. African American Tours – possible anchor site in the ESCHR
4. River linkages and activities
5. Ecotourism, fishing and hunting
6. Integrated sub-regional touring routes, featuring all towns



# Program 3 – Rural and Nature Activities and Trails



## Program 5 – Signage (Statewide)

SCPRT co-opted into the approvals process for tourism signage

SCPRT approve tourism attraction, facility or destination signage, refer to SCDOT for their consideration

SCDOT assess taking account of road type, speed and spacing between signs and other technical issues.





## Program 6 – Homestay (Statewide)

Development of tourism in rural areas will create a demand for new forms of lodging: location-specific, seasonal, small.

Broadening of the State's present homestay segment – inns, B & B, rural homestay - in order to create:

1. local economic development opportunities,
2. local employment opportunities, and give
3. communities a tangible stake and interest in the development of tourism.



# Progress

- ESCHR established as a pilot project of SCPRT & Florence CVB in early 2013
- Translates plans to action, helps site managers prepare for more visitors and helps visitors find places to go
- Goal: to provide more options for day trips for beach visitors e.g. experience agriculture, arts and architecture, culinary, nature-based, military, racing, African American heritage, antique shops, farmers' markets.



# Operation

- SCPRT, Florence CVB & ESCHR work together, with experienced and committed personnel in each
- ESCHR reaches out to county and local administrations and through them to local operators and communities building interest and support  
...**AND** to operators in Myrtle Beach generating commitment for beach + clients
- SCHR coordinates everything: product (attractions & itineraries), marketing (website and brochure), signage, funding ... and maintains active contact with site owners



# Achievements to Date

- Raised funds of close to \$200,000 in first year – mainly from Florence CVB and SCPRT, with signage costs met by counties, municipalities or private sites.
- Website and brochures, piggybacking on current State marketing theme of Undiscovered South Carolina.
- Day trip itineraries – present focus – for optional add-ons for coach tours.
- Signage.



# Aspirations

- Established two rivers as SC Revolutionary Rivers (nature and military history) - application made for National Recreation Trail designation.
- Build cheerleaders – through ESCHR relationship with smaller sites and natural conservation & historic preservation people.
- State Legislature application for funding.
- Move from day visits to stopovers – using homestays - as the Region's reputation builds



# Lessons for Ireland

- **WORK TOGETHER - ALL GOVERNMENT LEVELS – PRIVATE SECTOR – COMMUNITY – TOURIST**
- **VISION AND COMMITMENT (INCLUDING TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL HELP FROM THE CENTRE)**
- **LEADERSHIP AND ABILITY TO CONVINCe ALL PLAYERS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE MUTUAL BENEFITS FROM COLLABORATION AND PLAYING THEIR PART, INCLUDING FINANCIAL**



# Lessons for Ireland

- **MAINTAIN CONTACT – KEEP RELATIONSHIPS ALIVE ESPECIALLY WITH SMALL ENTITIES**
- **NETWORK - PUTTING PARTNERS TOGETHER – CREATING CLUSTERS, CIRCUITS/TRAILS**
- **PURSUE ALL TYPES OF AWARENESS RAISING – WEBSITE AND OTHER MARKETING, CREATING AMBASSADORS (Cheerleaders) AND SPECIAL FEATURES SUCH AS A FOOD PROVENANCE THEME, OR RECREATION TRAIL DESIGNATION**



# Lessons for Ireland

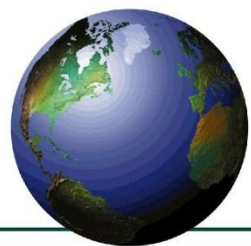
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**BOTTOM LINE – IT IS THE PEOPLE THAT  
MAKE IT WORK – LEADERS WITH VISION,  
COMMITMENT, DETERMINATION,  
PERSUASIVENESS, CONSISTENCY ....**





# THANK YOU



Tourism Development  
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