

2014 CEDA Awards Winners

City of Gautier, Mississippi

Nature's Playground Streetscape Project
Community Involvement Category
Population of 15,001 to 40,000

The City of Gautier's recent completion of the Nature's Playground Streetscape Project is an excellent example of a successful grassroots community development initiative. For twenty-seven years the City of Gautier, located on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and home to approximately 18,500 residents, has been known as a drive-through community without an identifiable brand. In 2008, the City was awarded a Katrina Community Development Block Grant for a Community Revitalization Project. City leaders decided to use this funding to create a central downtown feel by adding decorative lighting, landscaping, pedestrian shelters, a Veterans Tribute Tower on the grounds of City Hall, multi-use pathways, and a signature gateway sculpture and round-about. By tapping into key associations that connect people, the Streetscape Project became a collaborative effort that served to build relationships and map important community resources. Today, the City has a beautified Town Center and a community brand promoting its unique resources, but even more significantly the Streetscape Project's participatory process has strengthened civic groups, built relationships across social generations, and increased relationships with government decision-makers.

The Mississippi Development Authority awarded funding to the city for a Comprehensive Plan in 2007. The planning efforts included feedback from residents at a kick-off meeting and subsequent ward meetings as well as community surveys and input from the Planning Commission and City Council. When the time came to develop plans for the City's \$5.9 million Streetscape Project, numerous community meetings were held. Gautier Pride, Inc., an ad hoc beautification group established in 1989, became a key player in this planning.

Community involvement continued to grow with the participation of our Gulf Coast veterans, community volunteers, students, business leaders, local foundation staff, school district administrators, chamber of commerce staff, artists, Mississippi Development Authority, Gautier Planning Commission, and Gautier City Council.

One of the benefits of the Streetscape Project has been an increased sense of community pride along with a sense of excitement about the City's future development. By tapping into key associations that connect people and place, the end result is lasting and sustainable.

- Community members representing multiple generations and social classes.
- Streetscape Banner Art Contest using the Nature's Playground theme
- The next step in the Town Center's progress includes a \$90 million redevelopment of Singing River Mall.

Town of Marion, Virginia

Pop Up Marion/Small Business Boot Camp *Business Attraction Category* **Population of 5,000 to 15,000**

The Town of Marion, in partnership with Marion Downtown!, the Virginia Main Street Program, the Virginia Department of Business Assistance, People Inc., The Chamber of Commerce of Smyth County, WOLD/WZVA Radio, and Wells Fargo Bank, offered a program to fill vacant storefronts in our historic downtown.

The program, “Pop Up Marion!” combined the necessary elements of small business success – training, business plan development, on-going mentorship, networking, and initial operating capital – in an exciting, vibrant, hands-on approach to rebuilding the local economy through entrepreneurship.

Following a community survey to engage the shoppers and to identify the specific needs in the market, the team offered its first-ever “Small Business Boot Camp,” participants spent eight evenings in intensive, interactive classroom settings learning the basic skills of small business and developing a business plan that they presented to the class for graduation. From that graduation class, each of the businesses had an opportunity to win \$5,000 in startup capital, advertising credit, and on-going mentorship. The winning businesses had to participate in special events, extended hour campaigns, and meet at least monthly with their business mentor.

The project was kick-started with the \$15,000 grant from Virginia Main Street, but quickly garnered regional attention. Representatives from Wells Fargo Bank asked to be able to join, and provided an additional \$5,000 grant. The radio stations provided \$1,000 advertising credit to each of the winning businesses, and promotional airtime to the contest.

The initial class drew 42 participants. At the end of the intensive “boot camp,” 11 entrepreneurs were ready and presented their plans. The two winning businesses, “Rufflections Pet Grooming and Day Care” and “The Herb House Trading Company” both filled long-vacant downtown buildings. In fact, “Rufflections’ owner Tosha Harris, bought her building because of the program. In addition, two other businesses, a clothing store and a music store, opened in downtown specifically because of the consumer survey and without grant assistance.

“Pop Up Marion” is a proven, exciting way to grow our local economy through helping budding entrepreneurs and existing business owners learn the skills they need to be successful.

- Eleven jobs are directly attributed to the first round of “Pop Up Marion,” and Round Five will have another group of entrepreneurs set to graduate in March.
- DOWNTOWN STOREFRONT VACANCY RATE: FROM 17.2% to 6.7%!

Tupelo/Lee County, Mississippi

Tecumseh Products Company *Business Retention and Expansion* **Population 40,001 to 100,000**

To meet the challenges of a global economy in 2011, Tupelo/Lee County community and economic development leaders took a collaborative risk in pursuing an opportunity for growth in an existing industry, Tecumseh Products Company. As a result of the community's collective planning efforts for long-term success, Tecumseh Products Company announced July 24, 2013, an expansion creating 150 jobs and \$13 million in capital investment. By successfully adapting from a traditional strategic plan focused on expected results, the Community Development Foundation (CDF) and its community partners developed an innovative project strategy by anticipating future project opportunities.

Tecumseh Products Company is a leading global manufacturer of hermetic compressors, condensing units, and systems for use in residential and commercial refrigeration and air conditioning applications. Tecumseh Products Company has operations across the world and its Lee County plant alone currently employs nearly 500 workers drawing from 9 Mississippi counties. A recent trend of outsourcing Tecumseh jobs to Brazil and India prompted the Community Development Foundation to adapt a plan to reverse the trend. To do so, Tupelo and Lee County leveraged its economic development partners, financial resources, and its workforce to successfully bring jobs back to Mississippi and the United States.

Although the expansion project was announced in 2013, its development dates back three years prior. The resulting \$2.2 million consolidation and modernization project aimed to reduce the amount of production lines and add new equipment. Through this proactive, non-traditional strategy in recognizing and preparing for future growth opportunities, the resulting project announcement retained 380 jobs and paved the way for long-term growth within the plant and community.

With the completion of the consolidation and modernization project, economic development leaders traveled to Tecumseh's Michigan headquarter to express their appreciation. Following that trip, the Lee County facility became a contender for the AE² compressor production line, which then culminated in winning the AE² line in 2013.

- The project's secondary benefits to the community include the AE² compressor's reduced environmental impact through its energy efficient performance, and Tecumseh's heavy community involvement.

Virginia's Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck Regions

Virginia's Watermen Tourism Training Program

***Business Retention and Expansion * Community Development * Community Involvement
Population Over 100,000***

Virginia's wild harvest of fish and other seafood products has been in decline for several decades due to declines in Chesapeake Bay health, decreasing and often unreliable catches, and the ever-increasing costs of doing business. The average age of today's working waterman is over 60 years old and it is rare that younger watermen choose commercial fishing as a career option. As watermen leave the industry, their legacy and knowledge is lost. Local communities are also negatively impacted because these losses impact local economies and their access to safe, local seafood. Rappahannock Community College's Workforce and Community Development office developed a program that capitalizes on the knowledge and earnings potential of commercial watermen and leverages that produce positive economic impacts for the local communities.

Virginia's Watermen Tourism Training Program provides training for watermen who wish to supplement their incomes by developing tourism-based businesses. The program spurs economic development throughout coastal Virginia, connects the public directly with working watermen as educators and Bay stewards, and emphasizes the benefits of buying local seafood. The three primary Virginia project partners have been Rappahannock Community College Workforce and Community Development, Virginia Waterman's Association, and Chesapeake Environmental Communications.

RCC identified funds for two initial training classes, both of which were held in 2013. Nine watermen students enrolled in the Middle Peninsula class. This spring three of those nine are pursuing captain's licenses through Chesapeake Marine Training Institute with grant funding we secured. Our training classes provide tools and resources for business development (customer service, liability, marketing, networking, community partnerships, etc.), storytelling and curriculum development, and ecosystem science. Our classes also include a final project where each waterman presents his/her outline for their business and detailed curriculum ideas to receive group feedback.

- This program encourages cross-industry partnerships with local bed & breakfasts, tour bus operators, restaurants, and charter boat captains.
- The Watermen's Tourism Training Program has been developed to be a transferable program around other coastal regions of Virginia and could also be replicated in other states.