

# DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF THE SR 365 CORRIDOR IN HALL COUNTY, GEORGIA:

## Tourism Potential

*Prepared for*

Hall County Board of Commissioners

*Prepared by*

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## OVERVIEW

Hall County's State Route 365 runs northeast from Gainesville to the Habersham County line. An extension of Interstate 985, near Clarksville it becomes U.S. 23 which leads to North Carolina. Alternatively, travelers can turn east at this point and follow U.S. 123 to South Carolina. To the south, three major interstates bring travelers to Atlanta -- I-75, I-85, and I-20. From there, travelers can easily connect to I-985 and SR 365. The geographic position of SR 365 makes it part of an important route for tourists driving between Georgia, Florida, Alabama, western North Carolina, and eastern South Carolina. It has been used as a gateway to the north Georgia mountains, but currently offers scant enticement to travelers to stop along the way. Little has been done to market the corridor's attractions together or as part of a cohesive itinerary. Although some attractions directly on the corridor experience a reasonable volume of pass-through traffic, many others are not immediately visible from the corridor nor marked by directional signage.

Research has repeatedly proven that tourism creates jobs and new businesses, and it is an important part of the economies of the United States, Georgia, and many communities in Georgia, including Hall County. According to the Georgia Department of Economic Development, visitors to Hall County in 2002 spent \$180.6 million. This supported 2,400 jobs with wages of \$45.7 million. Hall County and its municipalities received an estimated \$5.43 million in related tax revenues. Without a doubt, tourism is economic development. Recognizing this, local leaders asked EDI to assess the tourism potential associated with the SR 365 Corridor.

The portion of SR 365 under consideration in this assessment runs from the Rabbittown Road interchange (Exit 24) to the Habersham County line -- a distance of approximately 15 miles. Local leaders feel that the northern 3-mile portion of this corridor may have potential for tourism development. Because tourists are typically less aware of political boundaries than are residents, and because there may be synergies between tourism assets across a wider area, this analysis looks at the potential for tourism along the entire 15 miles of SR 365, as well as in a corridor up to 10 miles wide centered on the route. Assets found north and south of the corridor in the same direction of travel may also be significant and have, in some cases, been included in this assessment.

## STAKEHOLDER VIEWS<sup>1</sup>

EDI interviewed 62 stakeholders in March 2004 to gather their perspectives on the economic development potential of Hall County generally and SR 365 in particular.

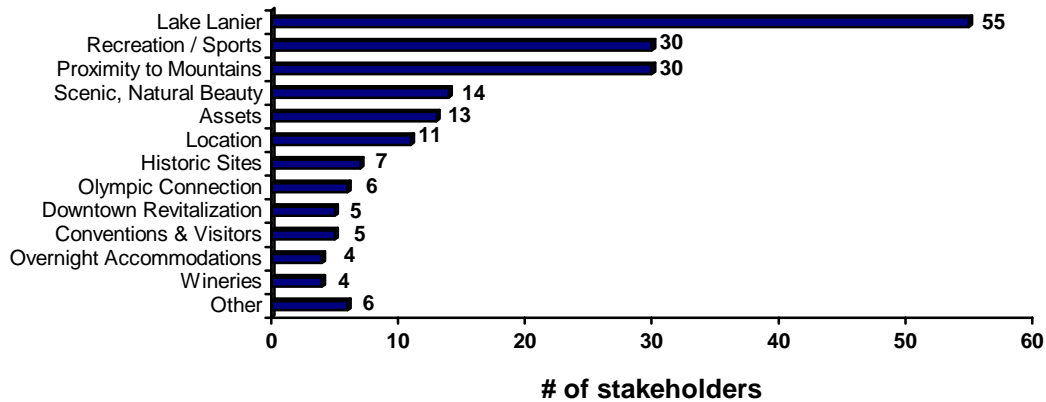
When asked about strengths relating to tourist attraction, the vast majority (88.7 percent) of stakeholders cited Lake Lanier or Lake Lanier Islands as being the county's key advantage. Nearly half (48.7 percent) of the stakeholders identified advantages relating to various recreation and sporting opportunities within Hall County. Rowing, kayaking, canoeing, and visiting Road Atlanta were most frequently mentioned.

Proximity to the mountains and mountain-related events were also mentioned by nearly half (48.4 percent) of the stakeholders. More than one-fifth (22.6 percent) of the stakeholders commented on the natural or scenic beauty of the area. Gainesville's many cultural offerings, such as arts, theater, music, and museum assets, were recognized by another fifth (21 percent) of the stakeholders.

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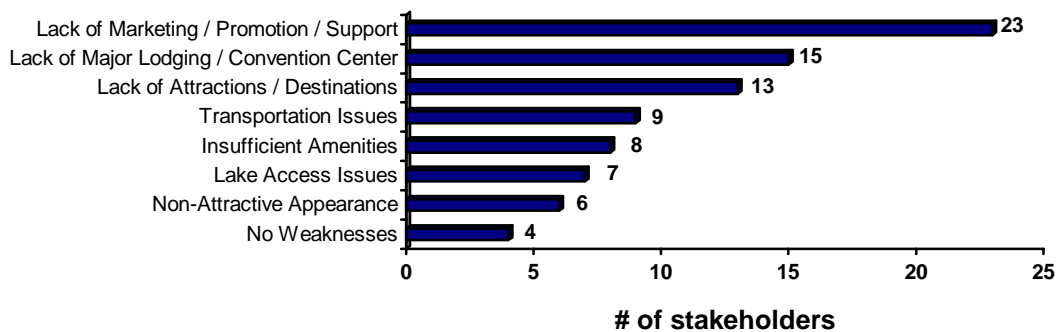
<sup>1</sup> For more details, see the companion report, "Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia: Interviews with Community Stakeholders."

**Figure 1. Stakeholder Opinions of Tourism Strengths**



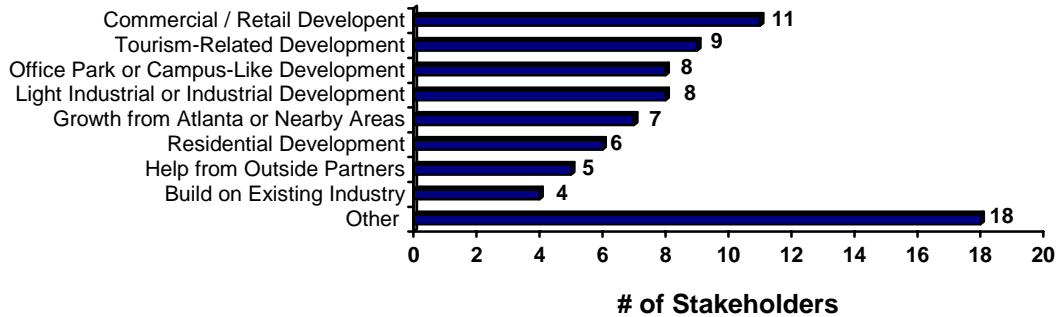
In terms of community weaknesses for attracting tourists, lack of marketing, promotion, and leadership support for tourism were mentioned most frequently, cited by more than one-third (37.1 percent) of the stakeholders and accounting for more than one-fourth (27.1 percent) of the total responses provided. Nearly one-fourth (24.2 percent) of the stakeholders mentioned the lack of a major lodging and/or convention center as a weakness. Just over one-fifth (21 percent) mentioned that Hall County lacks major attractions or a major destination site. Traffic flow and other transportation-related issues were mentioned fairly often as weaknesses.

**Figure 2. Stakeholder Opinions of Tourism Weaknesses**



Stakeholders cited tourism-related development second-most frequently when asked to identify opportunities for economic development along the SR 365 Corridor. This indicates that community stakeholders recognize tourism as a key economic development vehicle for the corridor. The other two most frequently identified opportunities among the top three -- commercial / retail development and office park or campus-like development -- are quite compatible with tourism-related development.

**Figure 3. Stakeholder Opinions of Corridor Development Opportunities**



Although stakeholders felt that Lake Lanier was the county’s most important tourism asset, many still believed that the county lacks an overnight destination attraction and major lodging. This attitude may signal a lack of understanding of the nature and importance of Lake Lanier visitation to the economy of Hall County. It may also indicate that stakeholders feel the county needs a major attraction and/or major lodging that are not lake-related.

Some of the stakeholders’ other opinions support the notion that they may need further education on tourism. They may not understand how much is spent on tourism promotion, nor that these expenditures are largely determined by the amount of hotel/motel tax collected. In Gainesville’s case, 60 percent of that tax revenue goes to support the Georgia Mountain Center and the Mainstreet Program.

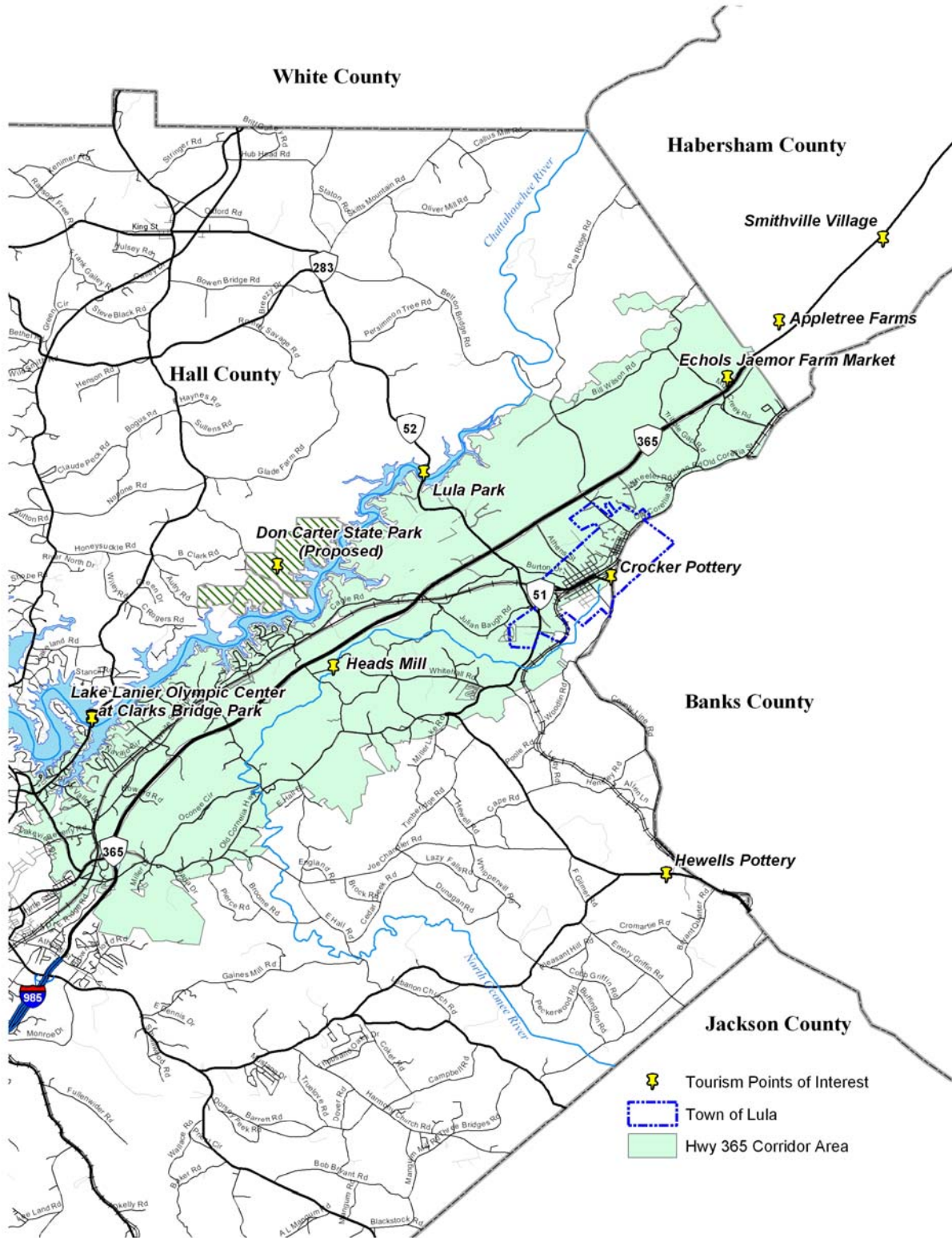
## APPEARANCE AND SETTING

State Route 365 in Hall County rises very gradually from approximately 1,200 feet of elevation at Rabbittown Road in the south to 1,300 feet at the Habersham County line. The surrounding land is primarily steep, rolling, wooded hills, with occasional views of the Appalachian Mountains to the north. Vegetation appears to be second- and third-growth mixed hardwoods and pines. Most of the visible land is undeveloped, with scattered retail and service businesses along the route. Northeast of the Rabbittown interchange, a substantial parcel has been cleared and graded for the Gainesville Industrial Park North. Although these waterways are not generally visible, the route parallels an arm of Lake Lanier to the north and the North Oconee River to the south.

Two small communities lie south of SR 365 - Gillsville and Lula. Gillsville is more than 10 miles from the 365 corridor, and thus won’t be considered further. Lula is in very close proximity to the route, and may have some appeal to visitors, as well as potentially being impacted by them.

From a tourism standpoint, the corridor possesses assets that can be categorized as historic, cultural, and natural/recreational. The most important of these are included in this section.

**Figure 4**  
**365 Corridor Tourism Assets**



## Historic Assets

*Head's Mill* - An 1850s grist mill approximately one mile southeast of SR 365 on Whitehall Road, this property is Hall County's last remaining historic mill, and one of only a handful of intact mills in Georgia. A 2003 study of the mill conducted for the county by Jack Pyburn, Inc., stated that "(The mill) represents a significant historic point of interest on the North Oconee River corridor." It is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is one of only nine remaining buildings in Hall County so designated.<sup>2</sup>

The mill is a 2-story, wood-frame structure with several porches, a steel overshoot millwheel, and a millrace. It is located immediately beside the North Oconee River, which provided the power to drive the wheel. The river runs through a steep gorge, characterized by rocky shoals and tumbling water -- a very picturesque setting. The site also contains several associated outbuildings, including a barn and spring house. Some of these date from the establishment of the mill and enhance the overall historic value of the site. These structures, along with a 4-acre parcel of land have been acquired by Hall County using state greenspace funds and, through an agreement with the county, are currently managed by the Friends of the Mill. This organization intends to mount a fund-raising campaign to restore the mill and open it to the public.



**Figure 5. Head's Mill**

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<sup>2</sup> 1999 Inventory of Notable Historic Structures Remaining in Hall County and Incorporated Municipalities Constructed Before 1940, Gainesville-Hall Trust for Historic Preservation, June 1999.

*City of Lula* - Lula was established when four railroads began crisscrossing the county in 1873, primarily as a coaling and water stop. A National Historic Register town, it contains a historic village center with several late-1870s Victorian homes.<sup>3</sup> One particularly notable and fully restored home is at 5904 Wall Street, although it not open to the public.

*Other Historic Buildings* - Several historic buildings are scattered throughout the corridor, mainly churches and homes dating from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. Although not open to the public, they contribute to the overall sense of history a visitor feels when driving through the area.

*Smithville* - Smithville is a retail enclave composed of several historic and historically recreated buildings brought together on SR 365, just north of the Habersham County line. The historic buildings date from the mid-1800s to early 1900s and include a mercantile store, a smoke house, and a gazebo. Visitors can shop for antiques and decorative items, enjoy lunch and tea in the tea room, and purchase ice cream and desserts in the log cabin café. A wedding chapel is also available, and various buildings and the grounds can be rented for functions. The facilities are attractive and in good repair, and have excellent visibility from SR 365. It is open Tuesday through Saturday, year round, with no charge for admission.

## Cultural Assets

*Crocker Pottery* - The studio and gallery of folk potter Michael Crocker, this unusual facility is housed in a converted chicken house on County Line Road in Lula, about 10 minutes from SR 365. Specializing in traditional, north Georgia folk pottery characterized by face jugs, snake vases, and runny wood-ash glazes, Crocker's features contemporary works by the Crocker family, as well as historical pieces from many important folk potters of the region, notably the Meaders family. Crocker pieces are widely collected and have been acquired by the Smithsonian Institution, the New York History Museum, and the Atlanta History Center.

Crocker's hosts semi-monthly kiln openings featuring two months of in-house production for sale. In addition, there are four exhibits of historical and contemporary pots in alternating months. Michael Crocker lectures on the art form at these exhibits, which often feature Meaders pottery.

Although Crocker's rates as an important tourism asset for Hall County, its appeal is primarily to a limited audience dominated by collectors of the art form. The gallery and studio have a capacity of 50 persons, and attendance in 2003 was estimated at 3,500 to 4,000. Approximately 500 of these visitors were on group tours.

Crocker's is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., year-round. There is no charge for admission.

*Hewell's Pottery* - Hewell's is located about 15 minutes southeast of Highway 365 near Gillsville on Highway 52. It is a pottery production facility and retail and wholesale outlet. It specializes in unglazed, hand-thrown terra cotta gardenware, as well as the traditional, north Georgia folk pottery similar to that of Crocker Pottery. The Hewell family has been making pottery in Georgia since at least the mid-1800s. Today, several members of the Hewell family are well-known folk art potters, as well as involved in all aspects of the business.

In October, Hewell's hosts a one-day traditional crafts and culture festival known as Turnin' and Burnin'. Attracting upwards of 35,000 attendees, it offers sales and demonstrations by potters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, weavers, heirloom seed dealers, and antique dealers. There is no admission charge.

Hewell's is open year-round, from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday. There is no admission charge.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

R.A. Miller, folk artist - The rustic home studio of this Hall County-based folk artist is located on Rabbittown Road, just off SR 365. No additional information was available.

Jaemor Farm Market - Jaemor is a traditional country store catering primarily to tourists, but also serving local residents. It is an attractive building displaying country-store merchandise outside, with good visibility from SR 365. It offers local produce, hand-crafted furniture, pottery, and baked goods. Farm tours and "you-pick" apples in season are available by reservation for tour groups, as is a newly constructed group meeting and dining facility called the Pumpkin House.

Jaemor is open seven days a week, April through December, and Monday through Saturday, January through March. Hours are 7 a.m. to 7 pm, June through August, and 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. the remainder of the year. Sunday hours are 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. year round.

Appletree Farms - This attractive retail and dining establishment fronts directly on SR 365 in Habersham County, about 10 minutes north of the Hall County line. A two-story traditional frame structure of contemporary origin, Appletree encompasses the Habersham Winery tasting room and the McIntosh Grill serving lunch Tuesday through Sunday and dinner on Friday and Saturday. It also contains a gift shop and country store featuring decorative accessories, toys, garden accessories, gourmet foods, and organic produce (in season). Upstairs is an art and antique gallery specializing in traditional north Georgia folk pottery, as well as other folk and fine art.

During the last three Octobers, Appletree has hosted a one-day Pottery Festival on its grounds. Approximately 15 potters were represented, with an average of 500 visitors.

## Natural and Recreational Assets

North Oconee River - The North Oconee River flows southwest, roughly paralleling SR 365 until it turns south and then east at White Sulphur Road. More of a creek than a river, it is an undeveloped natural asset providing scenic views and wildlife habitat, and helping to preserve water quality.

Lake Lanier - Lake Lanier is a 38,000-acre U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lake located primarily in Hall County. More than 7.5 million people visit the lake annually, making it one of the most visited lakes in the Corps of Engineers system. The east arm of the lake, into which flows the source of the lake -- the Chattahoochee River -- parallels SR 365 to the north. Several lake-related assets are in close proximity to the highway and are described below.

Lake Lanier Olympic Center At Clarks Bridge -- Approximately four miles from SR 365, the Olympic Center was the site of the 1996 Summer Olympics' rowing and paddling events. It has an attractive setting on Lake Lanier and boasts viewing stands, a boat house, and a dramatic, brightly colored timing tower at the finish-line. Co-owned by the city and county, the venue is leased to the Gainesville Hall '96 Foundation, which subleases the site to the Lake Lanier Rowing Club (LLRC) and the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club (LCKC).

A small park jointly run by the city and county is across the street from the Olympic event facilities, but part of the same complex. It offers three boat ramps, a small beach, restrooms, picnic tables, grills, camping, fishing, and swimming. It is open dawn to dusk, year-round, with no admission charge.

The Lake Lanier Olympic venue is considered one of the finest sites for rowing and paddling in the U.S., if not the world. The completely straight 3 kilometer course, which is consistently at least 50 feet deep, coupled with high, tree-lined banks to block cross-winds, provide ideal conditions for both sports. The viewing stands, timing tower and course equipment are state of the art, adding to the appeal of the facility.

The LLRC and LCKC share a building on the site, located in a fenced compound next to the city/county park. The two clubs are jointly responsible for managing the Olympic venue, and are partially funded by revenues derived from events held at the facility. They each host several sporting events each year, provide Olympic training facilities, lessons for adults and children, summer instructional camps for

children, and the LCKC provides public canoe and kayak rentals. Each has a professional, full-time executive director. In addition, the LCKC employs the equivalent of three full-time staff, while the LLRC employs several part-time staff equally approximately 25 percent of full time. Both clubs are open dawn to dusk, Monday through Saturday, and often on Sunday, year round.

The two clubs host six to eight sporting events each year, each lasting from one to seven days, and involving anywhere from 180 to 5,000 athletes. In 2002, the clubs forecasted the number of events and expected direct revenues out through 2011. Revenues for each event range from \$1.8 million to \$8.6 million, and totaled \$27 million. Note that this is direct revenue, and is not net of expenses, which is not a true picture of the potential economic impact. Further, not all of this would be captured by Hall County, as many athletes and spectators spend the night in surrounding counties. No information was available regarding the expected cost of these events.

The largest event hosted to date, other than the Olympics, was the International Canoeing Federation Flatwater Racing World Championships held in 2003. It involved 580 athletes; 374 coaches, trainers, and officials; and an average of 2,000 spectators each day. The Gainesville Hall County CVB estimated the economic impact on Hall County at \$3.2 million. Regarding the financial results from hosting the facility, the LCKC estimated its direct income and expenses at \$1.4 million, indicating that the event broke even. However, an additional \$1.4 million worth of event-related improvements to the venue were paid for by Hall County; the City of Gainesville; and the state, through the Lake Lanier Islands Development Authority.

Several other events or activities are held at the venue each year, including a Taste of Gainesville festival, National Learn to Row Day, rowing and paddling lessons, and corporate team building programs.

Despite two strong clubs and a world-class venue, the Olympic site has several weaknesses that affect its potential for further development and impact on Hall County.

- 1) The racing venue is limited to 12 to 15 event days per year. Because access must be limited to the area of the lake near the venue during each event, and because the Corps of Engineers is responsible for ensuring equitable public access to the lake, the Corps has imposed the 12 to 15 day limit. Currently, the two clubs' events absorb most, if not all of these days.
- 2) The high quality of the facilities and equipment at the venue, as well as the world-class course, make it very attractive to potential event organizers. However, to cover the higher cost of these amenities, the clubs must charge more for hosting events, which many event organizers are unable or unwilling to pay.
- 3) The amount of overnight lodging in Hall County is insufficient to accommodate the larger events. While lodging is available in surrounding counties, the additional travel time is viewed negatively by event organizers.
- 4) Hall County lacks convenient high-end as well as affordable lodging for race participants and spectators. This too is a negative with race organizers.
- 5) In addition to hosting special events, another means of generating tourist revenues is leveraging the facility's assets to attract day and overnight pleasure travelers touring the area. A representative of the LCKC stated that it rented canoes and kayaks to the general public, and that it would like to increase this business. However, the facility lacks signage informing visitors of its purpose and hours, and large "No trespassing" signs at the site discourage visitors. The club advertises the availability of rentals in the local newspaper, but does not include any rental information on its Web site.

Lula Park -- the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provides another public access point for Lake Lanier at Lula Park. Located on Route 52, 2.5 miles north of SR 365 on the banks of the Chattahoochee River, the park provides extensive parking and a boat ramp. It is open dawn to dusk and admission is free.

Don Carter State Park (planned) -- Comprised of 1,000 acres, the site is north of the Olympic Center and south of Lula Park on the Chattahoochee River. The park's master plan was drafted in 1998, but has yet to be implemented due to a lack of funding. The plan calls for a wide variety of amenities, including a visitor center, cottages, RV and tent campsites, walk-in campsites, a group shelter accommodating 200 people, picnic areas, playgrounds, several docks, walking, biking and horse trails, wildlife observation areas, scenic overlooks, boat ramps, and a swimming beach.

Upper Chattahoochee River Canoe Trail (proposed) -- For several years, there have been discussions regarding establishing a canoe trail on the Chattahoochee River north of Lake Lanier. Various parties have been involved including the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Wildwood Outfitters. No formal trail currently exists, although a small brochure with a hand drawn map was produced privately. The proposed route of the trail would begin at Duncan Bridge Road in White County. Although there was some discussion about starting the trail farther north at Buck Shoals in White County -- a proposed state park site -- there are Class 2 and 3 rapids between Buck Shoals and Duncan Bridge, making that section unsuitable for the general public. From Duncan Bridge, the trail would follow the Chattahoochee south to landings at Mossy Creek (White County), Belton Bridge (Hall County), Lula Park (Hall County), and terminate at the Olympic Center. Currently, the movement to establish the canoe trail appears to be dormant.

Other Natural Assets - Beyond the individual assets listed earlier, the 365 corridor provides aesthetic benefits to Hall County residents and visitors, including mountain vistas, rolling hills, forested land, wildflowers in various seasons, and fall foliage.

## **TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION**

The Gainesville/Hall County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) has primary responsibility for developing and marketing tourism in Gainesville and Hall County. Funding for the CVB's efforts comes from a portion of the lodging tax revenues in several jurisdictions, including the City of Gainesville, Oakwood, and Lake Lanier Islands; and from memberships, sponsorships, grants, and cooperative advertising revenues. The presence of several large resorts on Lake Lanier, as well as a number of other smaller properties, provides solid funding for the CVB. Because there are no lodging properties in unincorporated Hall County, the county provides no funds to the CVB. Despite this, the CVB markets the entire county, wisely viewing the county's assets as contributing to the overall attractiveness of the area.

In addition to the CVB's efforts, the Gainesville/Hall County Chamber of Commerce operates a welcome center for visitors at the chamber offices in downtown Gainesville.

Based on discussions with the CVB president, and a review of the CVB's Web site and printed marketing materials, its focus is primarily on three assets: Lake Lanier, Road Atlanta, and downtown Gainesville. A recent regional campaign entitled the "Great Lakes of the South" was spearheaded by the CVB, and encompasses all the Corps of Engineers lakes in Georgia. Although some of the assets found along the 365 Corridor are listed on the CVB's website, there has been no effort to systematically define and market the corridor geographically or thematically. This is not to be construed as a criticism, but is simply the strategic direction taken by the CVB. It is also consistent with viewpoints offered by stakeholders interviewed by EDI.

## **THREATS**

Recently, plans for a sewer line to serve the 365 Corridor have been made public. The route of this sewer line may impact the Mill site and/or the North Oconee River, although there is some disagreement here between the county government and the Friends of the Mill. An evaluation of the

impact of the sewer line on the mill site and the river is beyond the scope of this study. However, every effort should be made to preserve the mill and its immediate (visible) surroundings, as it is a significant historic asset for county residents and visitors alike. Protecting the North Oconee River is of equal importance -- to ensure water quality, preserve natural habitat, and preserve the natural beauty of the waterway.

## KEY FINDINGS

Tourism is already a critical component of the Hall County economy. With the county's emergence as a metropolitan statistical area and its projected growth, the importance of tourism is likely to grow along with the community. Statewide economic development partners recognized the importance of Hall County's tourism attractions as a key economic development factor, providing them a rating of 4 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest possible rating.<sup>4</sup>

There are many tourism assets within the 365 Corridor, almost all of which are recognized by the Hall CVB and included in its marketing materials. However, the strategic importance of these assets, as a group, or thematically, has not been considered prior to this research.

Although the current economic impact of tourism along the 365 Corridor can't be firmly documented, employment at the various assets documented earlier totals at least 34 full-time personnel in Hall County, and another 10 full-time in Habersham. Only the commercial establishments are included in this count. Employees required to maintain and operate Lula Park, and to maintain the Olympic Center site, as well as various commercial establishments such as gas stations, restaurants, and quick marts, are not included. In addition to this, the key assets together attract many visitors to the area, with special events attracting thousands at various times of the year.

Key to any plan to increase tourism visitation and/or revenue is a recognition that the aesthetic integrity of the 365 Corridor is of critical importance. A lack of well-conceived land use planning could result in damage to the corridor's natural beauty. If the surroundings are visually degraded by poorly planned industrial, commercial, or residential development, the tourist traffic that currently passes through on the way to the mountains will stop less frequently. Because overnight and destination tourism builds on day-trip and pass-through tourism, these higher-impact forms of visitation will have even less chance of developing. Issues relating to quality growth of the corridor are discussed in greater detail in the companion report, "A Quality Growth Study of Northeast Hall County, Georgia."

If marketing efforts were focused on the corridor, or some subset of its assets, there is the potential to increase tourism revenues. This is without adding any new products to the area, such as additional hotels, restaurants, or shops. This increase would largely derive from existing pass-through visitors who stay a little longer and spend a bit more than before.

Head's Mill is an important historic and tourism asset for Hall County. Restoring the mill and opening it to the public, particularly as a working mill, would constitute a major draw for visitors to the area.

Two tourism themes dominate the corridor, particularly in combination with other assets throughout Hall County - historic/cultural tourism and outdoor recreation. Considering the entire corridor, as well as other major assets in close proximity, a strong case can be made for targeting historic and cultural tourism. The list includes Head's Mill, Jaemor Farm Market, Smithville historic village, Hewell's and Crocker potteries, and the new Northeast Georgia History Center in downtown Gainesville.

Outdoor recreation along the corridor is primarily oriented around Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River. The east side of Lake Lanier receives less marketing focus than the Lake Lanier Islands area, but represents a different, more natural experience that could appeal to a separate market. Many

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<sup>4</sup> For further details, see companion report, "Development Potential of the SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia: External Viewpoints On Marketability."

potential visitors perceive Lake Lanier as overcrowded; an alternative, less-crowded area of the lake could be a draw.

Attracting additional rowing and paddling events represents another marketing strategy, and the Olympic venue is a significant asset in this regard. However, there are several issues that should be addressed before pursuing this further: (1) the true economic costs and benefits of hosting various events are unknown. (2) The site and Hall county have two main weaknesses with respect to attracting events -- a lack of lodging and high facility rental costs. (3) The facility is limited to 12 to 15 water-based event days per year.

Development of Don Carter State Park would help to address the lodging shortage, particularly on the low end. According to the clubs, camping and group shelters are a viable option for younger athletes and those from developing countries.

Attracting recreational canoeists and kayakers to this portion of the lake, either as a destination or as a stop along the way to somewhere else, is another strategy the county might consider. Several assets support this strategy, including Clarks Bridge Park and the Olympic venue, the availability of canoes and kayaks for rent from the LCKC, and an additional put-in site at Lula Park. The proposed Chattahoochee River Canoe Trail would add even more support to this strategy.

Hall County's statutory lack of liquor-by-the-drink may also affect the tourism development potential of SR 365. This situation limits the ability to create certain lodging, dining, and entertainment amenities along the corridor. The county has held several referendums on liquor-by-the-drink, but all have been defeated.