



HATTIESBURG

CONVENTION COMMISSION

2012

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annual report

HATTIESBURG CONVENTION COMMISSION

LAKE TERRACE CONVENTION CENTER

AFRICAN AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY MUSEUM

HATTIESBURG VISITORS CENTER

HISTORIC EUREKA SCHOOL MUSEUM

SAENGER THEATER

HATTIESBURG ZOO



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For more than 20 years, the Hattiesburg Convention Commission (HCC) has been developing and managing tourism-related facilities for our area. In the 1980s, an idea was conceived for an economic development tool that would draw new money to Hattiesburg. That idea was to form a volunteer group of business and community leaders who would put their experience, business acumen, and community dedication to work for the good of all the citizens of Hattiesburg. In 1990, the City Council requested that the Legislature of the State of Mississippi create this body and empower it to realize this vision of economic importance. In 1991, the HCC was formed with a legislative mandate to develop a convention center and other tourism-related facilities that would bring new revenues to our community. Since that time, the HCC has

FIRST-CLASS FACILITY MANAGEMENT

helped bring new dollars into our local economy by constructing, renovating and operating these facilities. The HCC has worked tirelessly to achieve the vision this community set in action two decades ago. Since the founding of the Commission, six tourism facilities have been developed to grow the impact of visitors and the long-term economic benefits for all of Hattiesburg. With this as its historical precedent, the Commission continues to look forward.

Continuing this history of growth and development, the Commission celebrated several milestones among its facilities in 2012. The African American Military History Museum hosted a preview reception of The History Channel's Vietnam in HD as well as a Korean War Event that honored all living Mississippi Korean War Veterans in partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense. Also, the Museum recorded more than 7,000 visitors throughout the year. The Hattiesburg Zoo celebrated 62 years of adventure with the unveiling of two attractions, including the "Touch Africa" Petting Zoo and a Mining Sluice sponsored by Parris Jewelers. Additionally, the Convention Commission was proud to re-open the back-side of the Zoo, an area that has been closed to the public for more than ten years. In 2012, the Saenger Theater produced over 300 event days and hosted more than 150,000 event patrons. And lastly, the Lake Terrace Convention Center hosted well over a quarter of a million guests during 1,119 event days, generating \$37 million in economic impact in Hattiesburg's local economy.







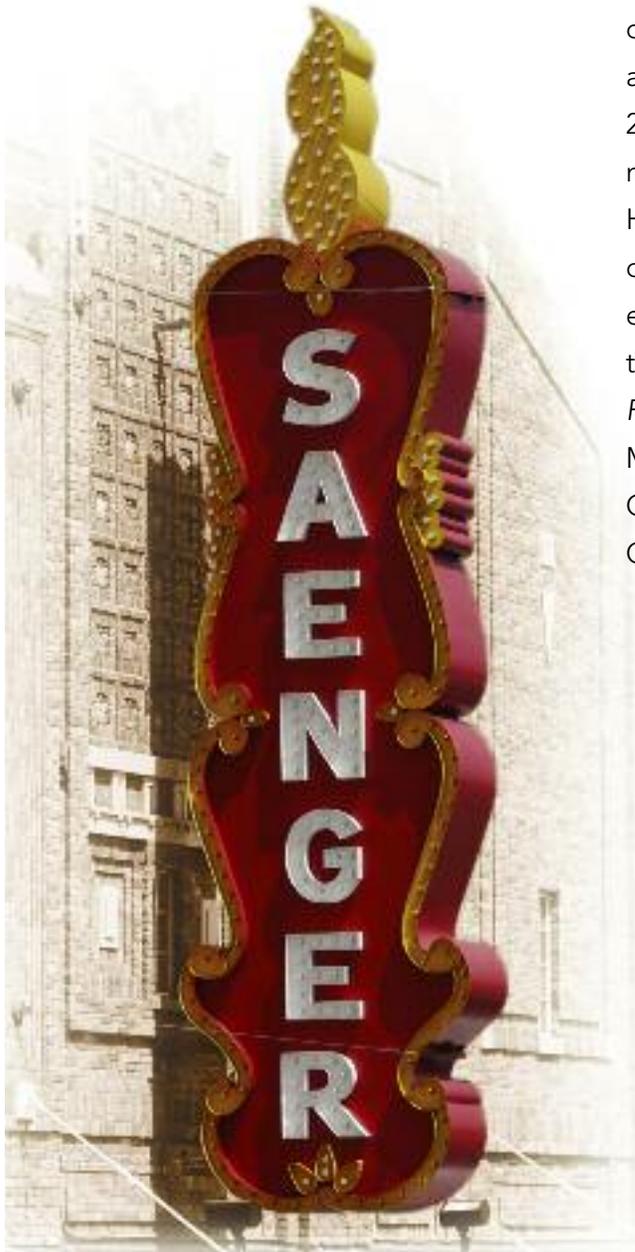
LAKE TERRACE CONVENTION CENTER

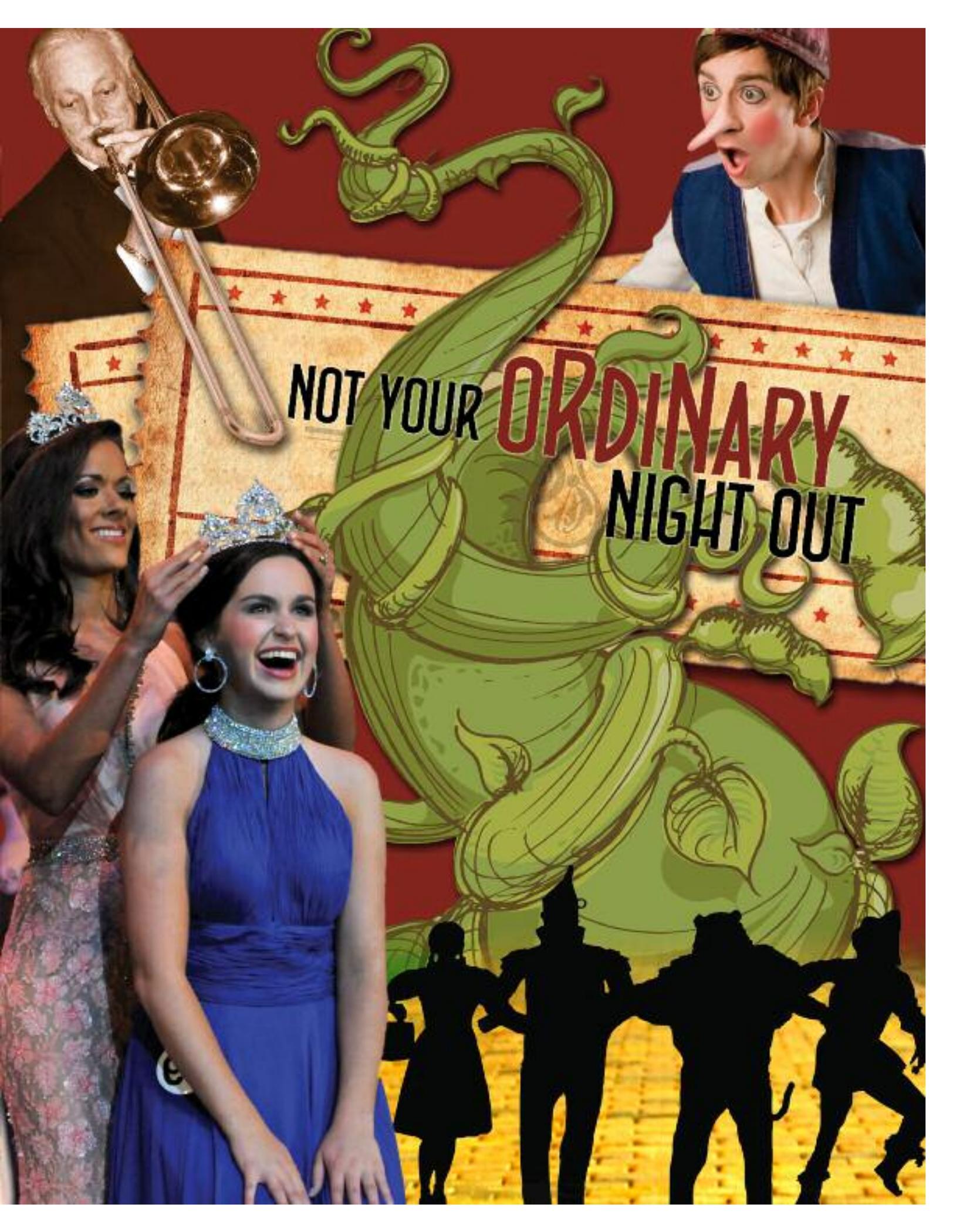
With a primary focus on the development of a convention center that would be the finest in the State of Mississippi, the Commission began the task of building something not before found in our community. Much evaluation, community input and study was conducted to ensure the investment would produce dynamic results many years into the future. Since opening in 1998, the Lake Terrace Convention Center has served as "Mississippi's Premier Meeting Facility." It has consistently topped other convention centers in the state in number of events held, as well as significantly out-performed like centers in similar markets elsewhere in the Southeastern United States. Lake Terrace has been named "Best of the Best" seven times in the Readers' Choice Awards presented by *ConventionSouth* magazine. The Lake Terrace Convention Center has served the Southeast for 14 years, hosting more than two-and-a-half million delegates during that time. Ranging from conventions to consumer shows, performances to special events, Lake Terrace has exceeded the expectations of its guests and introduced new friends to the Greater Hattiesburg Area. As a result, these visitors to Hattiesburg have spent more than 233 million new dollars in our local economy, creating a lasting effect that impacts each aspect of our community.



SAENGER THEATER

To much fanfare, the Saenger Theater opened on Thanksgiving Day in 1929, making the downtown gem 83 years old in 2012. When first opened, it cost only six cents for admission into the Saenger Theater movie palace, where you could sit beneath a massive chandelier and listen to a 778-pipe organ play between features. The historic Saenger Theater is one of only seven Saenger Theaters built and operated by the Saenger Brothers in the Southeast. Upon completion of a \$3.75 million renovation in 2000, the Saenger once again became a celebrated fixture in the heart of historic downtown. In the fall of 2003, the HCC was approached by the City of Hattiesburg to take on management of the Historic Saenger Theater in Downtown Hattiesburg. The HCC saw the Saenger as a great opportunity to drive business into downtown and further the growth of the local economy. In the past year, the Historic Saenger Theater served more than 150,000 patrons at events such as American Family Theater's *Pinocchio*, Forrest General Hospital's Winter Wonderland, Holiday Movies, Branson on the Road, *The Wizard of Oz*, City of Hattiesburg Concert Band, Roots Reunion, FestivalSouth events, Missoula Children's Theatre and the 63rd Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant.





NOT YOUR **ORDINARY**
NIGHT OUT



HATTIESBURG VISITORS CENTER

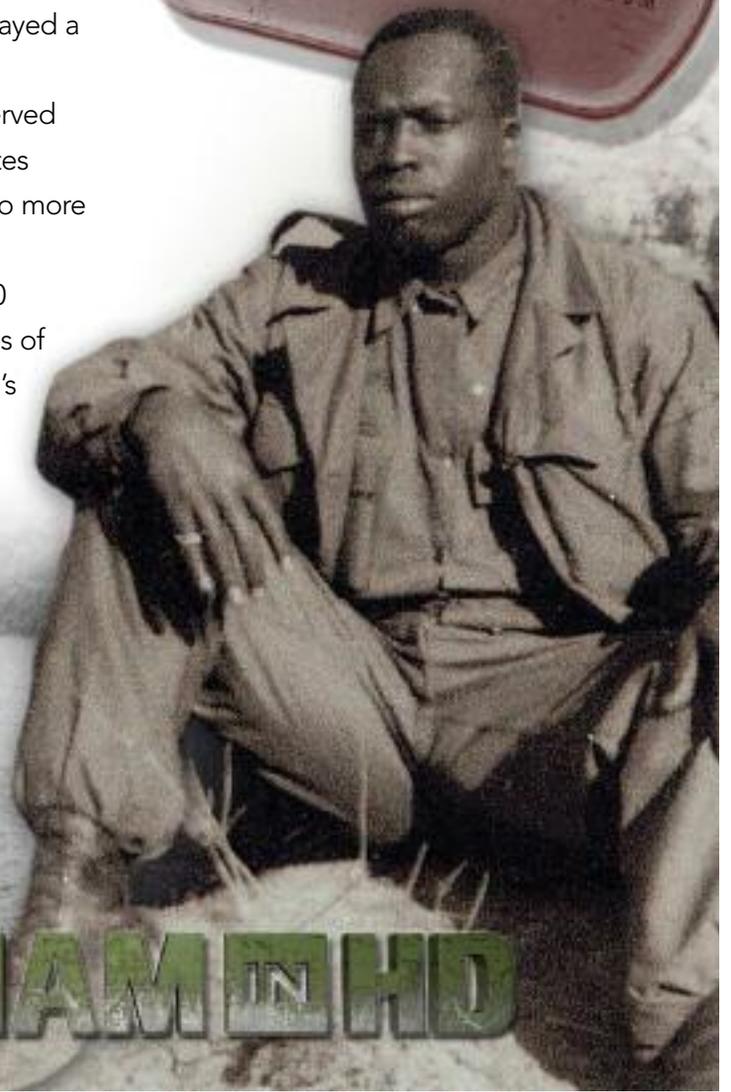
The HCC worked with the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the Mississippi Division of Tourism, the City of Hattiesburg and local supporters to develop a facility that would set the stage for each visitor's experience in Hattiesburg. In 2004, the Hattiesburg Visitors Center began welcoming visitors to Hattiesburg and has proved extremely successful at creating a positive first impression for visitors. Since opening, the Visitors Center has welcomed more than 80,000 visitors to Hattiesburg.





AFRICAN AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY MUSEUM

The USO Club on East Sixth Street has a monumental record of service to our African American Military heroes. Opened in 1942, the USO Club was constructed by community volunteers who invested more than 40,000 hours in the project. It is the only surviving USO built exclusively for African American soldiers and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 2003. The Museum was established and is governed by a volunteer board made up of Hattiesburg veterans. In 2006, the HCC and its partners in this process, including EURO Alumni Association, African American Military History Committee, Historic Hattiesburg Downtown Association, Mobile/Bouie Neighborhood Association and the City of Hattiesburg, played a major role in the Museum's rebirth. This USO Club now chronicles the sacrifice of Hattiesburg citizens who have served our country with distinction as members of the United States military. On May 23, 2009, the Museum opened its doors to more than 700 people who arrived to commemorate the grand opening of this unique attraction. Since then, nearly 20,000 visitors have witnessed our military history through the eyes of the African American soldier by experiencing the Museum's historic artifacts and captivating displays.

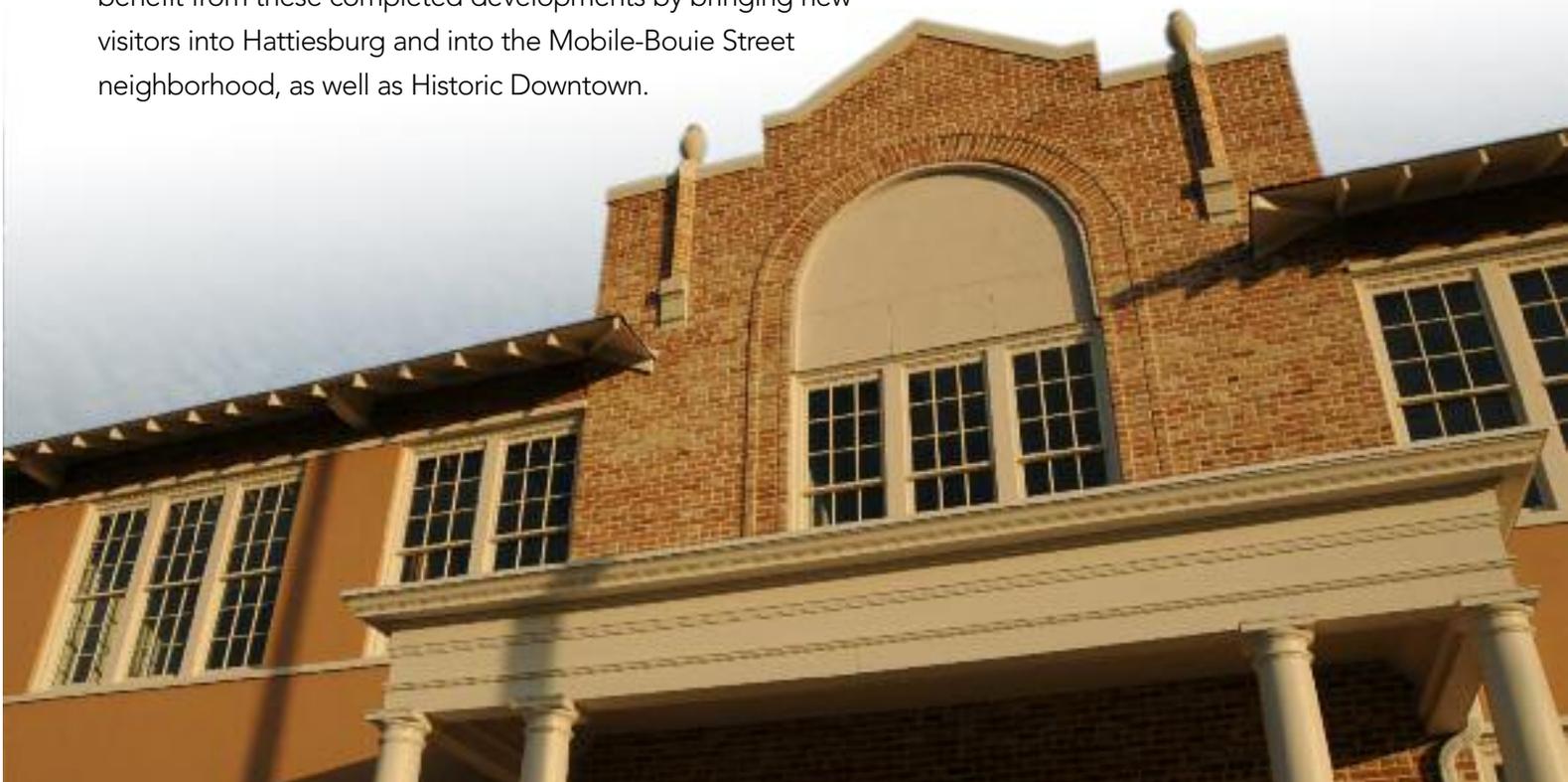


H
HISTORY
VIETNAM IN HD

A wide-angle photograph of the Historic Eureka School Museum, a two-story brick building with a central portico supported by white columns. The building has many windows with white frames. The sky is clear and blue.

HISTORIC EUREKA SCHOOL MUSEUM

The historic Eureka School was designated as a Mississippi landmark in 2005 and serves as the core of the educational history and heritage of African Americans in Hattiesburg. This brick schoolhouse was built in 1921 for African American students and housed students in grades 1 through 12 until the high school moved to Royal Street in 1949. This 89-year-old building is home to the EURO Alumni Association. When complete, the building, which saw restoration begin in early 2008, will become an African American Heritage and Cultural Museum and Interpretive Center for the Civil Rights Movement in Hattiesburg. Early work has restored the building's front portico and windows to their original 1920s look, as well as completed the installation of a parking lot and landscaping on the grounds. Preservation of this historic structure and its conversion into a museum, which will chronicle the struggles and contribution of Hattiesburg's African American citizens, lays a course of growth for the future. The rise in cultural tourism will benefit from these completed developments by bringing new visitors into Hattiesburg and into the Mobile-Bouie Street neighborhood, as well as Historic Downtown.

A close-up, low-angle photograph of the Historic Eureka School Museum building. The focus is on the brick facade, a large arched window, and the white portico with columns. The sky is a pale blue.



HATTIESBURG ZOO

In 1902, John Kamper deeded 40 acres of land to the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) to be improved upon and used as a public park, known as Kamper Park. The Hattiesburg Zoo, set inside this 40-acre park, opened with only a few exhibits on Easter Sunday in 1950. The Hattiesburg Zoo continues to develop and grow under the management of the Hattiesburg Convention Commission, a relationship that began in late 2009. This year, the Zoo celebrated 62 years of animal adventure by unveiling the "Touch Africa" Petting Zoo and the Parris Jewelers Mining Sluice during the annual Birthday Bash. In addition, the Zoo opened an entire section that had been closed to visitors for more than ten years. Its continued advancement as a tourism destination earned the Hattiesburg Zoo the coveted Tourism Achievement Award presented by the Mississippi Tourism Association at the 2012 Governor's Conference on Tourism. Given annually, this award recognizes a tourism entity that does an outstanding job at growing an attraction to continually increase visitation.





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