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*Augusta*  
GEORGIA



**EVENTS PLAN  
FOR PUBLIC PARKS  
IN AUGUSTA, GEORGIA**

February 7, 2017

An Events Plan for Public Parks  
in Augusta, Georgia

Presented by  
Conventions, Sports and Leisure, International



February 7, 2016

Mr. H. Glenn Parker  
Augusta Recreation and Parks Department  
2027 Lumpkin Road  
Augusta, Georgia 30906

Dear Mr. Parker:

We have completed the study process and preparation of an events plan for specific park areas in the City of Augusta. The basic objective of the study is to develop an events plan to better activate several key outdoor areas within the City.

We sincerely appreciate the assistance and cooperation we have been provided in the completion of this study and would be pleased to be of further assistance in the interpretation and application of our findings.

Very truly yours,

CSL International

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Augusta, Georgia's 70 park sites and 1,500 acres of parkland are managed by the Augusta Recreation and Parks Department (Department), the operator of public park and recreation facilities throughout Richmond County. These parks and public green spaces offer a wide variety of quality facilities and activities for people of all ages and are enjoyed by thousands of local residents and visitors every year.

To better activate this inventory of parklands, the Department retained CSL to develop concepts for potential new event activity that would spur interest and activity in these areas, as well as enhance the quality of life for area residents and destination appeal to visitors. The following five Recreation and Parks-managed areas were studied due to a multitude of factors, including their geographic size, prominence within the community and/or overall potential to host a variety of event activity.

- Augusta Common
- Diamond Lakes Park
- Lake Olmstead Park/Stadium/Julian Smith Casino and Barbeque Pit
- Lock and Dam Park
- Jessye Norman Amphitheater
- Riverfront Marina
- The Boathouse Community Center

In addition to increasing activity and interest in the parks listed above, developing new outdoor events will provide more opportunities for community gatherings, visitor attraction and brand/image enhancement for Augusta. This Events Plan provides a research-based foundation for Department and community leadership in their efforts to achieve these goals.

This study process consisted of detailed research and analysis initiatives, including the following:

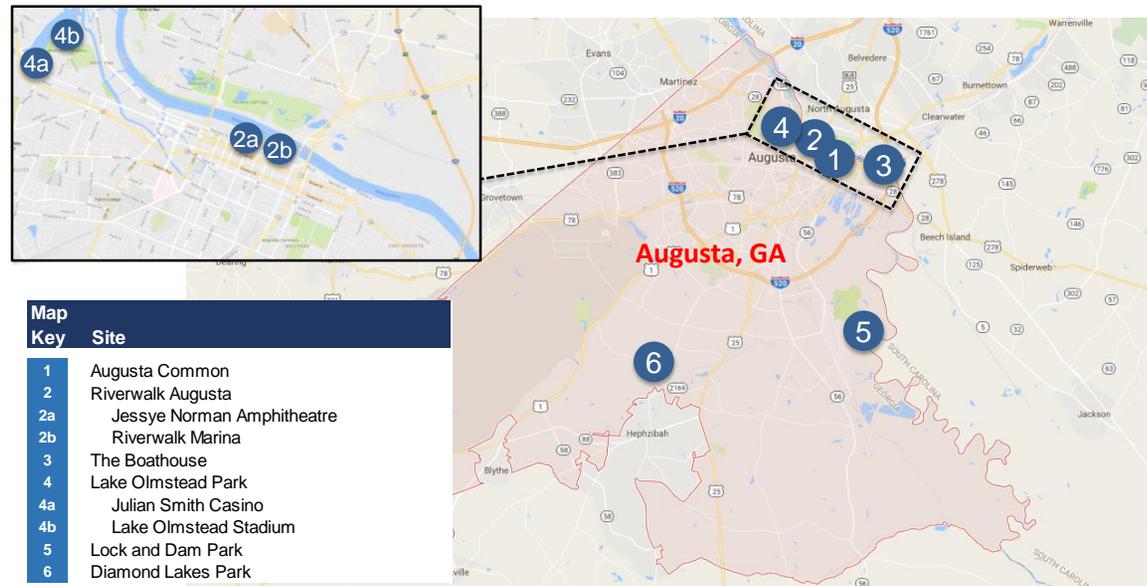
- ✓ Local market visit at the outset of the project, including community and site tours.
- ✓ In-person interviews/meetings with Augusta/Richmond County individuals, including representatives from the Recreation and Parks Department, the City of Augusta, the Augusta Convention and Visitors Bureau, Augusta University, representatives of key local area attractions, potential event development partners and business leaders, local facility and park users, and other key local stakeholders. A number of follow-up telephone interviews were also conducted with relevant community stakeholders.
- ✓ Analysis of existing events that occur at the selected park locations, including their date ranges, attendance figures and related data.
- ✓ Case study analysis of creative event festival concepts in several markets throughout the region and country that are comparable to Augusta.
- ✓ Comparative analysis of socioeconomic and demographic data from competitive/regional and comparable markets.
- ✓ Survey of over 930 local residents focused on suggested event locations, themes and related input. Results from these surveys were used to develop a set of key recommendations.

## 2.0 SITE ANALYSIS

The strengths, weaknesses and nuances at each of the park sites considered can provide an indication as to the types of event activity they can best accommodate. Factors to consider include a site’s proximity to surrounding population, its accessibility for vehicle and pedestrian access, existing utilities and facilities onsite, its geographic features (i.e. body of water, hills, open green space, etc.), and the overall attractiveness and/or natural beauty of the environment.

The map below provides an overview of the locations of the sites selected for this analysis.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Site Analysis Overview Map**



As shown, the sites are located in various areas of the City, including several near downtown, the Lock and Dam Park and Diamond Lakes Park. The relative proximity of the sites near downtown is a consideration for potential large scale, citywide events that could utilized multiple outdoor spaces. The Riverwalk area also includes the Jessye Norman Amphitheatre and the

Riverwalk Marina, while Lake Olmstead Park includes Julian Smith Casino and Lake Olmstead Stadium. Lock and Dam Park is situated along the Savannah River on the eastern border of Augusta, while Diamond Lakes Park is located in the middle of the southern half of the city.

Using detailed information and firsthand knowledge from the Recreation and Parks Department, CSL has prepared the following detailed profiles for each prospective event site.

### **Augusta Common**

	<p><i>Size:</i> 2.07 acres <i>Overall Usage:</i> High</p> <p><i>Strengths:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beautiful park space</li><li>• Administration building adjacent to park</li><li>• Comfort station is ADA-compliant</li><li>• Proximity to downtown businesses and Riverwalk</li><li>• Historical and educational features</li></ul> <p><i>Weaknesses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No signs for restrooms</li><li>• Security system and cameras needed</li><li>• No secondary exit for administrative offices</li><li>• Updates needed for groundcover areas and irrigation system</li></ul>
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### Diamond Lakes Park



Size: 286.13 acres  
Overall Usage: High

*Strengths:*

- Large number and variety of facility offerings
- Trees at ball field sites
- Scenic – features attractive trees and lakes
- Ample parking
- 25 RV hookups

*Weaknesses:*

- Lack of connectivity between facilities
- Security cameras needed
- Some erosion on walking trails
- Updates needed for groundcover areas and irrigation system

### Lake Olmstead Park/Julian Smith Casino and BBQ Pit



Size: 96.83 acres  
Overall Usage: High

*Strengths:*

- Beautiful setting
- Heavily used facilities
- Boat ramp and floating dock appear to be ADA compliant

*Weaknesses:*

- BBQ Pit Comfort Station and restrooms are not ADA compliant
- Casino needs restroom renovation
- Gazebo needs repair

### Lock and Dam Park



Size: 38.64 acres  
Overall Usage: Medium/High

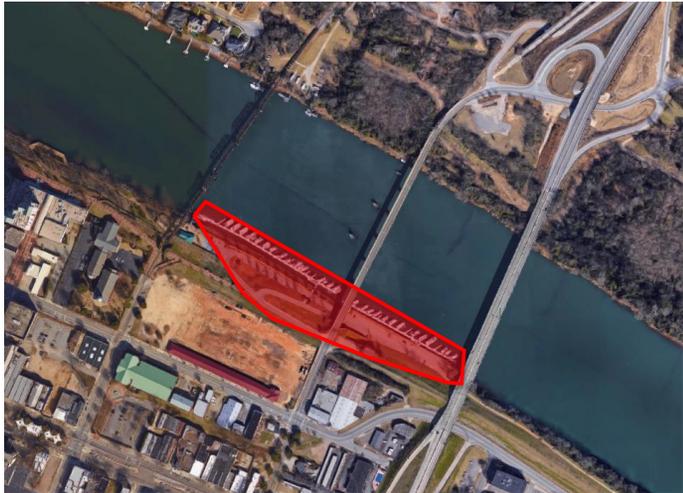
*Strengths:*

- Picnic areas by water with grills, nice setting
- Beautiful tree-covered property
- Boat ramp and small pier are ADA compliant

*Weaknesses:*

- Comfort stations are not ADA compliant and are outdated
- Fishing pier and dock in need of repair
- Picnic shelter roofs need repair
- Slope at dam parking lot may need a barrier/handrail
- Drinking fountains in poor condition

### Riverfront Marina



Size: 4.96 acres  
Overall Usage: Medium

*Strengths:*

- Well maintained
- Ample shade from trees

*Weaknesses:*

- Dock deck needs repair
- Nighttime vagrancy concerns at restrooms
- Boat ramp needs repair
- Concrete walks need repair

### Riverwalk Augusta



Size: 9.75 acres  
Overall Usage: High

**Strengths:**

- Proximity to waterfront and downtown
- Beautiful picnic and playground setting
- No parking issues
- Partnership with local garden clubs

**Weaknesses:**

- Vacant adjacent property
- Lack of enclosure, and somewhat disconnected at points from urban core
- Picnic shelters needed
- Improve landscaping and irrigation for aesthetics

### The Boathouse



Size: 10.51 acres  
Overall Usage: High

**Strengths:**

- Beautiful setting on river
- Highly used facility
- Open space often used for special events

**Weaknesses:**

- Front railing needs replacement
- Building is not ADA compliant
- Wood rot needs repair

As summarized above, each site offers distinct advantages and disadvantages that help determine the appropriate allocation of events. For instance, Diamond Lakes Park can potentially host overnight events due to its RV hookup offerings, while Lake Olmstead Park or The Boathouse could be more appropriate settings for cook-offs due to their indoor spaces. Each park area offers relatively scenic settings that are generally accessible by residents throughout Augusta area. Of note, settings such as the Riverfront Marina or Lock and Dam Park are used/visited significantly less than the other sites reviewed.

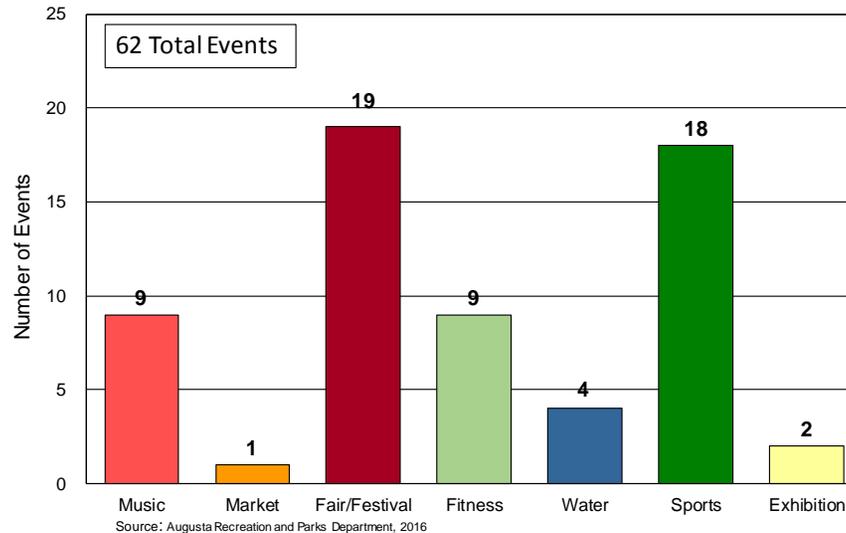
Popular event sites including Augusta Common, the Riverwalk and The Boathouse could be better prepared for future events with improvements to their existing facilities and amenities. This event space overview has been incorporated into the set of recommended events and locations presented later in this Plan.

### 3.0 EXISTING SPECIAL EVENT INVENTORY ANALYSIS

Understanding the existing mix of events, attendance, seasonality, themes and other factors at the set of park sites evaluated is important in establishing a base on which future added event activity can be planned for. A review of past and existing event activity also provides indication as to shortcomings and potential unmet demand for outdoor event space in the market.

Based on data provided by the Recreation and Parks Department, the following exhibit presents the total number of events held at the reviewed sites in 2015. Data are presented by event type in the following exhibit.

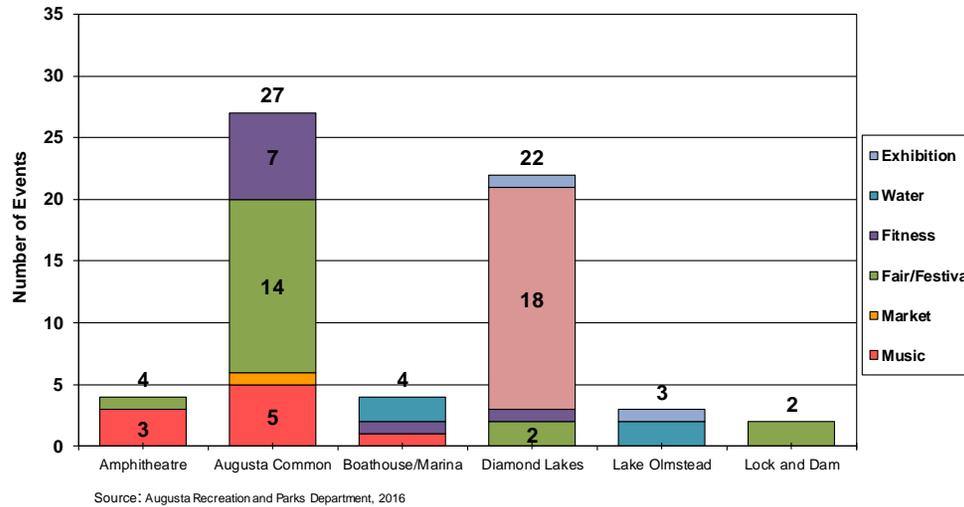
**Exhibit 2**  
**Number of Special Events by Event Type in 2015 (All Sites)**



As noted, the selected park areas host a number of family-oriented fairs and festivals as well as youth and amateur sporting events. However, more consumer-oriented events such as Markets and Exhibitions are rarely hosted at the sites analyzed. In

total, 62 events were held at the sites reviewed in 2015. To better understand which sites host particular event types, CSL prepared the following summary in Exhibit 3.

**Exhibit 3**  
**2015 Special Events by Type by Site**

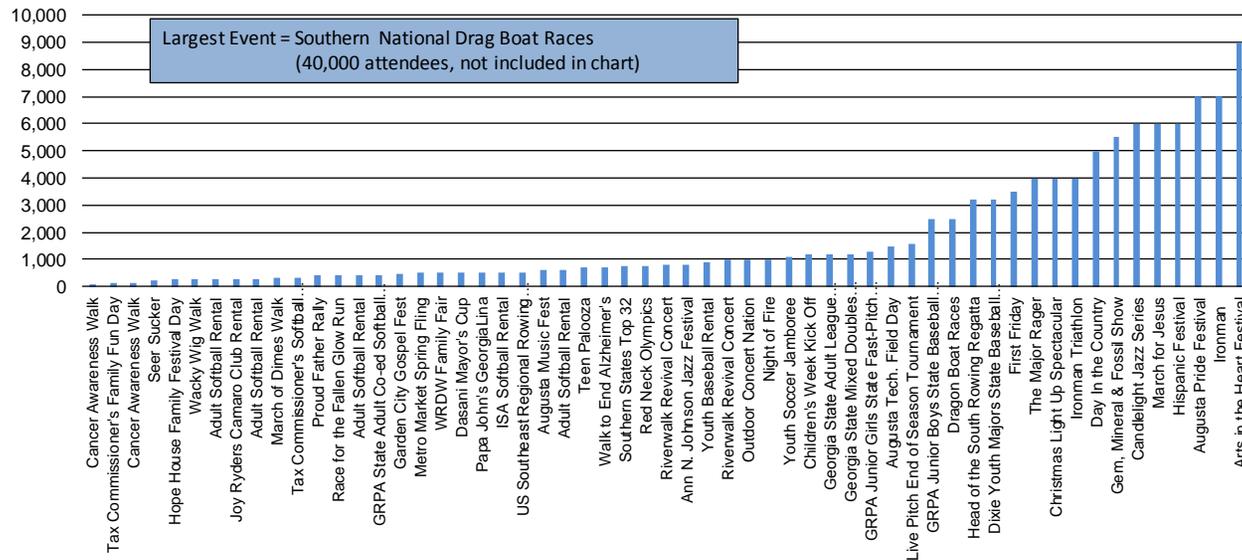


Augusta Common and Diamond Lakes Park each hosted the largest shares of overall event activity, while the Jessye Norman Amphitheater, the Boathouse/Marina, Lake Olmstead Park and Lock and Dam Park each hosted less than five events in 2015. Augusta Common hosts many of the city’s fairs and festivals and also serves as a headquarter station for large citywide fitness events such as charity walks and the Ironman. Meanwhile, Diamond Lakes hosts many large youth and adult sporting events, such as the Georgia State Adult League Championships and the Dixie Youth Majors State Baseball Tournament.

Several music events, such as the Riverwalk Revival Concert and Augusta Music Fest, are held at the Jessye Norman Amphitheatre on the Riverwalk and Augusta Common, respectively. Water events like the Southern National Drag Boat Races and the Dragon Boat Races are held in part at the Boathouse/Riverfront Marina and Lake Olmstead Park, respectively.

To provide more context regarding the size and popularity of each of these events, the following chart illustrates the total attendance of each event held in 2015 in order from smallest to largest. To better present the data in chart form, the exhibit does not include the attendance generated by the Southern National Drag Boat Race (40,000 attendees).

**Exhibit 4**  
**2015 Events by Total Attendance**



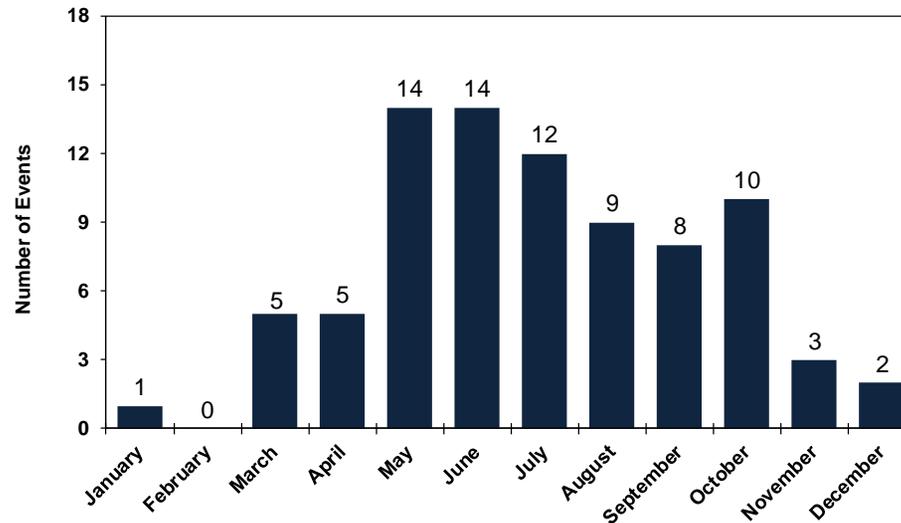
Note: Attendance figures not available for Mudbugabeaux Craw fish Festival or the Oka'chaffa Pow Wow and Wild West Festival  
Source: Augusta Recreation and Parks Department, 2016

As shown, there are a total of eight events that attract at least 5,000 attendees, of which The Drag Boat Race, Arts in the Heart of Augusta Festival, Ironman, and Augustia Pride Festival represent the four largest events in the city. The variance in theme and event categories for the four largest events in 2015 suggest that the Augusta market can support a variety of different large scale events. This will influence recommendations presented later in this report.

Exactly half (31) of the events held in 2015 attracted less than 1,000 attendees, reflecting the fact that much of Augusta’s event mix is comprised of more locally-oriented civic gatherings/events such as Hope House Family Festival Day, Adult Softball rentals at Diamond Lakes Park, and Metro Market Spring Fling. These smaller events can play a critical role in encouraging residents to visit the aforementioned parks, and the recommendations provided herein will consider additional opportunities to develop more of these community gatherings such as cook-off’s, local sports tournaments, and smaller concert series.

Finally, to understand the seasonality of event activity in the selected park areas, CSL has prepared a month-by-month count of outdoor events in the exhibit below. It is important to note that the monthly counts in the exhibit above consider each monthly or weekly installment of “series” events (such as the Candelight Jazz Series or First Friday) as individual events, so the overall event count is higher than in previous exhibits.

**Exhibit 5**  
**2015 Number of Events per Month**



Source: Augusta Recreation and Parks Department, 2016

As shown, the six-month period between the beginning of May and the end of October accounted for a significant portion of the overall event inventory in 2015. Event activity peaked in May and June and decreased moderately each month starting in July and proceeding through September. The months of January, February, March, April, November and December accounted for a total of 16 of the 83 events in 2015, representing less than 20 percent of the selected park areas' event inventory. These months represent "gaps" in Augusta's event calendar. Though the summer months and the period December through February are not ideal for outdoor events, this Plan will explore opportunities to develop appropriate seasonal events.

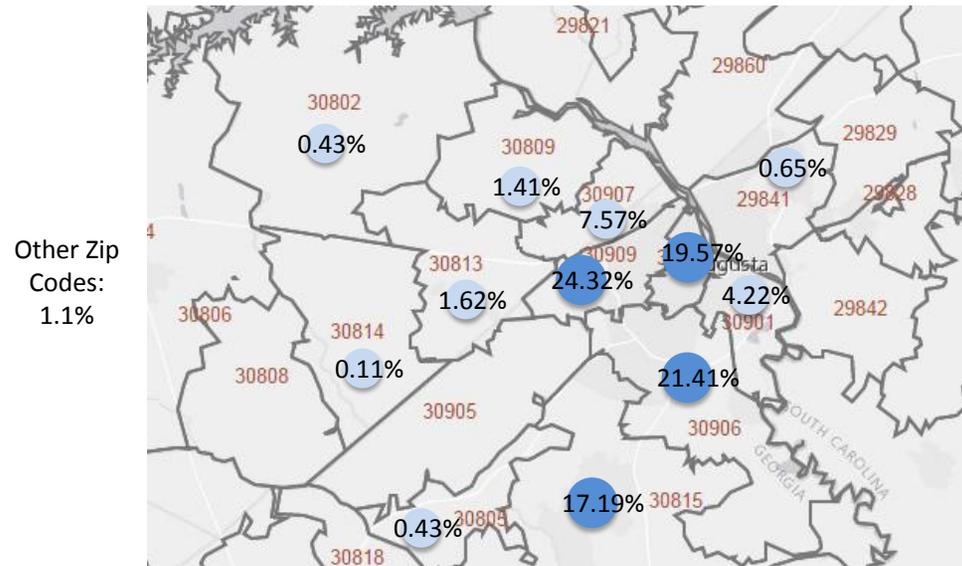
## 4.0 ANALYSIS OF LOCAL RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Publicly owned parks and opens spaces typically host events that can vary widely in terms of space needs, attendance levels and thematic content. The size, type and flexibility of the facilities offered at a given park space allows for the accommodation of events ranging from small community barbeques and picnics to large festivals and concerts. To help form a basis for the Augusta community's preferences within such a diverse market, in-depth surveys were distributed to over 25,000 local residents to assess their opinions as to event opportunities in the region.

More than 930 such interviews were completed. The responses collected were used to develop potential themes and to prioritize locations for event/festival development. The research conducted was also used to evaluate community opinions regarding the current state of the identified park areas and how these areas could be improved.

To understand the breakdown of survey respondents by geographic location, respondents were first asked to provide their zip codes. The exhibit on the following page illustrates the percentage of respondents originating from each zip code region within or adjacent to Augusta city limits.

### Exhibit 6 Zip Codes of Survey Respondents



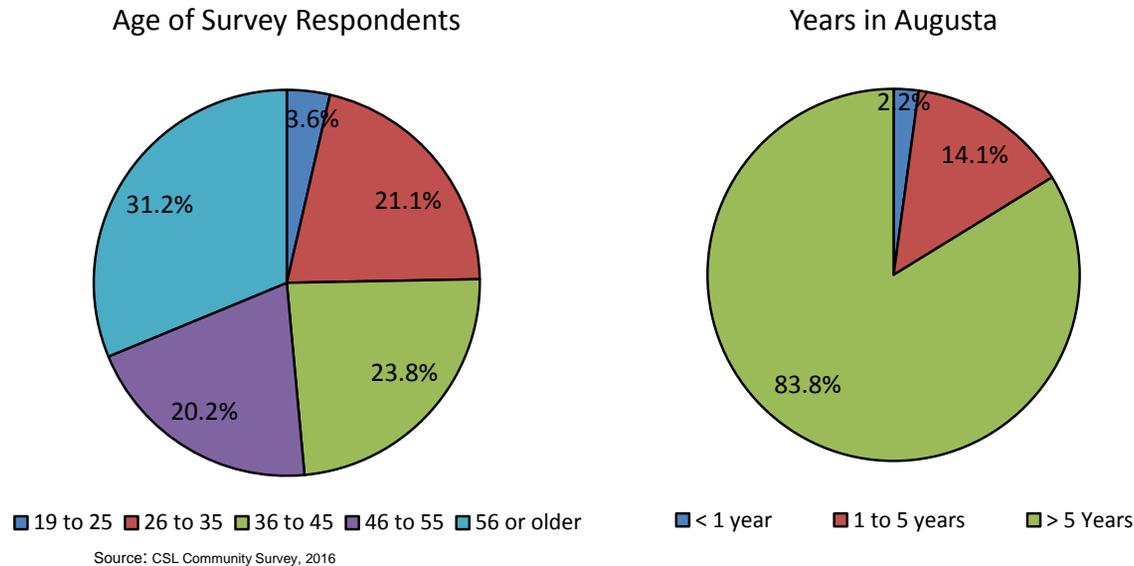
Source: CSL Community Survey, 2016

As shown, just over 82 percent of all respondents come from the combined 30815, 30909, 30906, and 30904 zip codes, and between 15 and 25 percent of respondents live in each one of these districts. It is important to note that these four zip code districts generally represent the north, south, west and eastern regions of Augusta, indicating a broad geographic representation for survey respondents.

This breakdown of respondent zip codes was also used to review event theme and location preferences by geographic region. For instance, the interest in potential event activity at Diamond Lakes was heavily dependent on the geographic origin of respondents - residents in South Augusta were strongly in favor of developing more events at Diamond Lakes while those in the North were more indifferent about its event potential. These types of comparisons will be explored further later in this section.

To further define the body of responses to the survey, residents were asked to indicate their age and the number of years they have lived in Augusta. A breakdown of their responses is presented in the exhibit below.

**Exhibit 7**  
**Age of Survey Respondents and Years in Augusta**



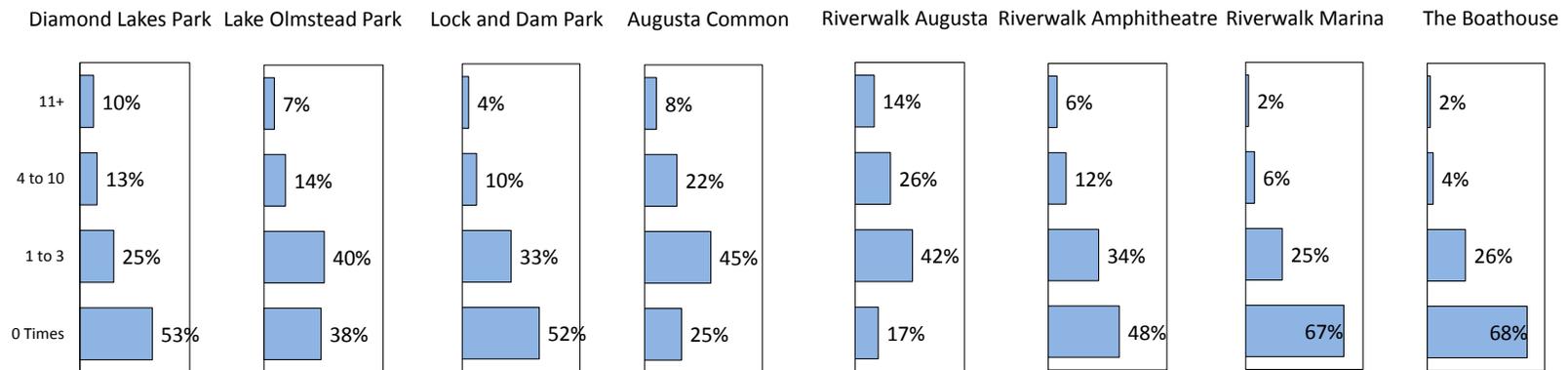
Respondents aged 56 and older made up the most significant portion of the survey sample at just over 31 percent. Overall, the number of survey respondents between the ages of 26 and 55 were equally distributed among age groups.

The right side of the exhibit above summarizes how long respondents have lived in Augusta. Nearly 84 percent have spent more than five years in the area, while just over two percent have lived there for under a year. The value of firsthand knowledge, insights and opinions coming from those who have spent significant amounts of time in the city is important, and the suggestions and responses provided by these residents helped to develop market-specific event ideas that will be viable for the Augusta

market. These data were also cross-referenced with respondent preferences for event types and locations to help create event concepts that would cater to specific age groups in the market. These findings are discussed later in this section.

It is useful to consider current visitation levels at each of the selected park areas. Survey respondents were therefore asked to indicate how many times they have been to Diamond Lakes Park, Lake Olmstead Park, Lock and Dam Park, Riverwalk Augusta, the Riverwalk Amphitheatre, the Riverwalk Marina, Augusta Common and The Boathouse within the past year. Responses by site are illustrated in the exhibit below.

**Exhibit 8**  
**Frequency of Visits to Selected Park Areas in Past Year**



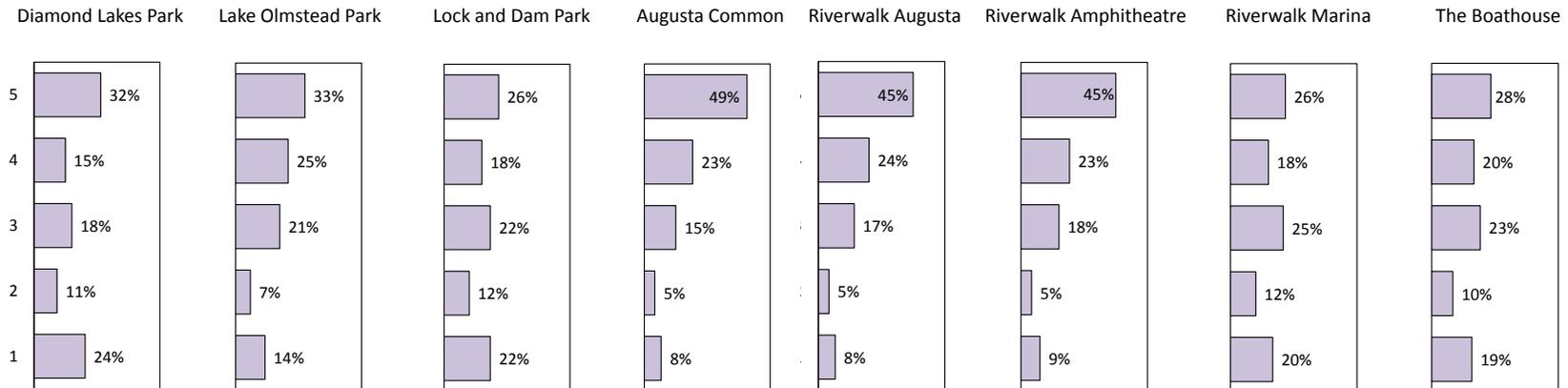
As shown, The Boathouse and Riverwalk Marina are some of the less frequented park areas, with 68 percent and 67 percent of respondents indicating that they have not visited these sites within the past year, respectively. Some of the more frequented park areas include Riverwalk Augusta, Augusta Common and Lake Olmstead Park, with 83 percent, 75 percent and 62 percent of respondents indicating that had been to these sites at least once in the past year, respectively.

These data align with each of the aforementioned sites' event counts reviewed in Section 3 of this document. Diamond Lakes Park could be considered an exception to this, with a relatively high historic attendance level combined with a fairly high share of respondents that have not visited the Park in the past year. This suggests that the heavy amateur sporting focus of the complex

yields a higher attendance among a smaller share of the population. The comparatively high percentage of respondents that have visited the Park 11 or more times in the past year further demonstrates this.

Respondents were then asked to express their interest in attending a potential new event in each of the selected park areas on a scale of one to five, with five being the highest score. These interest levels are summarized below.

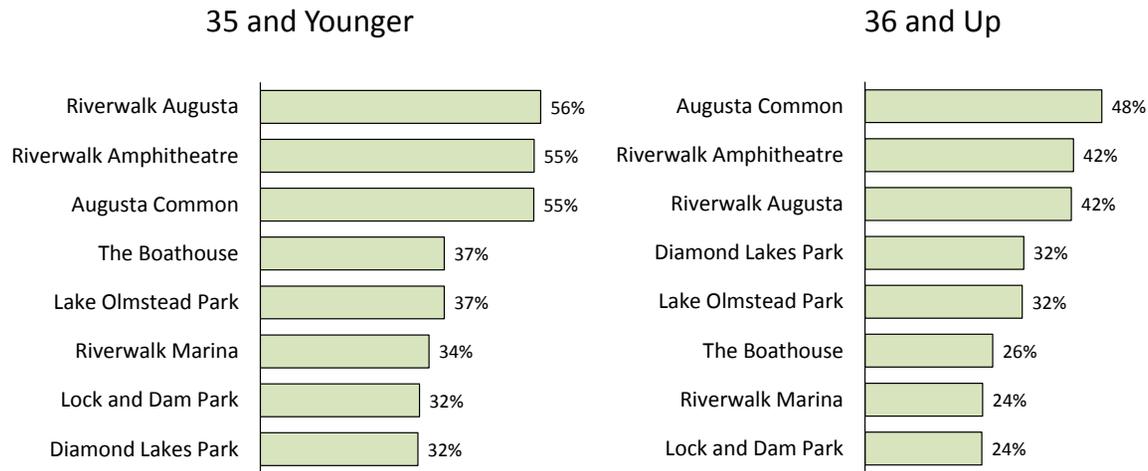
### Exhibit 9 Interest in Attending an Event/Festival in Selected Park Areas



Interest levels for downtown sites such as Riverwalk Augusta, Augusta Common and the Riverwalk Amphitheatre scored considerably higher among local residents, indicating that recommendations for large scale events that would generate significant attendance and food/beverage revenues would be best located at these popular sites. The Boathouse, Riverwalk Marina, and Lock and Dam Park registered moderate levels of positive interest (scores of four or five) from 48 percent, 44 percent and 44 percent of respondents, respectively. With positive interest measurements approximating 50 percent, it is still feasible to consider developing a broader array of targeted events at these sites.

To understand the distinct preferences of different age groups, CSL cross referenced the respondents' interest in the various sites with their indicated age. The results from this exercise are summarized below.

### Exhibit 10 Comparison of Site Preferences by Age Group



Source: CSL Community Survey, 2016

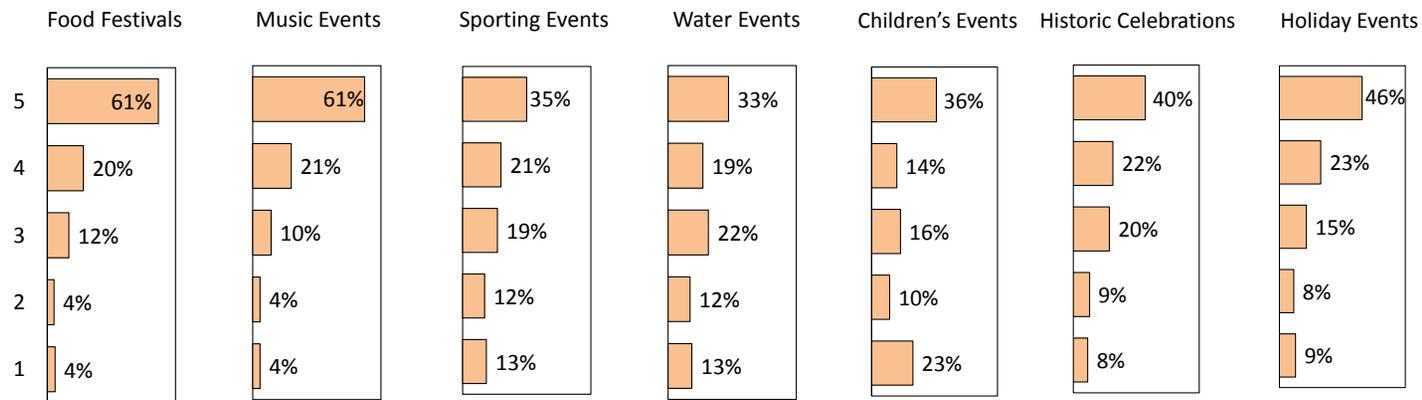
As shown, people of all ages tended to prefer Riverwalk Augusta, Riverwalk Amphitheatre and Augusta Common as event host sites. Riverwalk Augusta generated the highest approval rating among respondents who were 35 or younger, while people over the age of 35 expressed most interest in attending an event at Augusta Common. Interestingly, younger respondents expressed more overall interest than their older counterparts in holding an event at all of the selected sites except for Diamond Lakes Park, for which 32 percent expressed interest from both groups. Lock and Dam Park and Riverwalk Marina generated less interest from both age groups relative to the other selected sites.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their interest in the following types of events:

- Food festivals
- Music events
- Sporting events
- Water events
- Children’s events
- Historic celebrations
- Holiday events

A summary of their interest levels is presented in Exhibit 11 below in order of strength of interest.

**Exhibit 11**  
**Interest in Attending Event/Festival by Type**



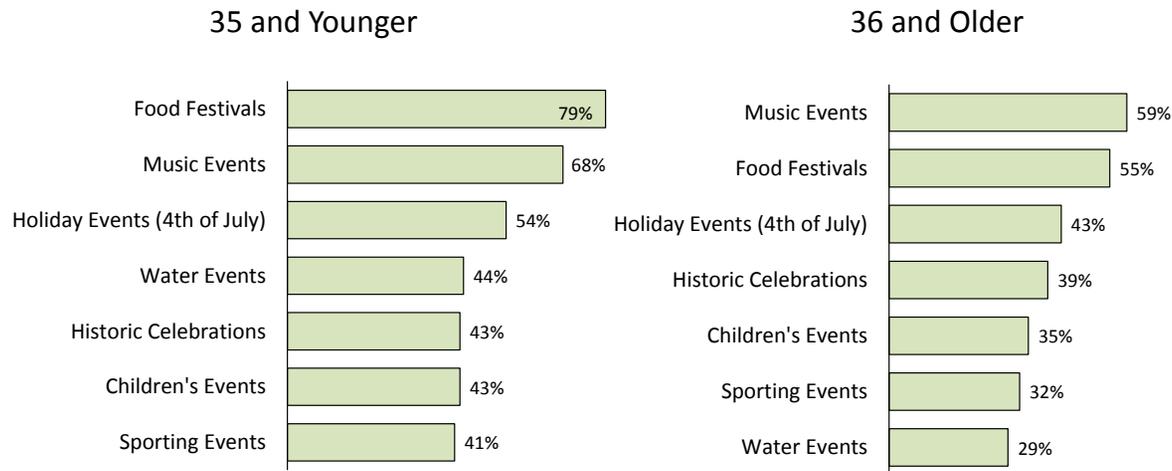
Respondents indicated the strongest interest in food festivals and music events, with 81 percent and 82 percent giving these concepts a rating of four or five, respectively. It is clear that event concepts including a food or music component should be highly prioritized. Sporting events, water events and children’s events were less popular among those surveyed but each still generated

moderately high levels of interest, with at least 50 percent of respondents scoring these concepts at a four or a five. Importantly, tying some of these less popular concepts with food or music elements could be considered in order to generate stronger attendance levels.

In addition, some event types such as children’s events tend to generate significant interest from specific segments of the population. These more “niche” events can be very successful with a more targeted attendee base.

These interest levels were then compared with the ages of the respondents to define which event types would be more preferred by the different age groups. Exhibit 12 below presents a segmentation of event type scores by age group (35 and younger versus 36 and older).

**Exhibit 12**  
**Interest in Attending an Event/Festival By Type – Comparison by Age Range**

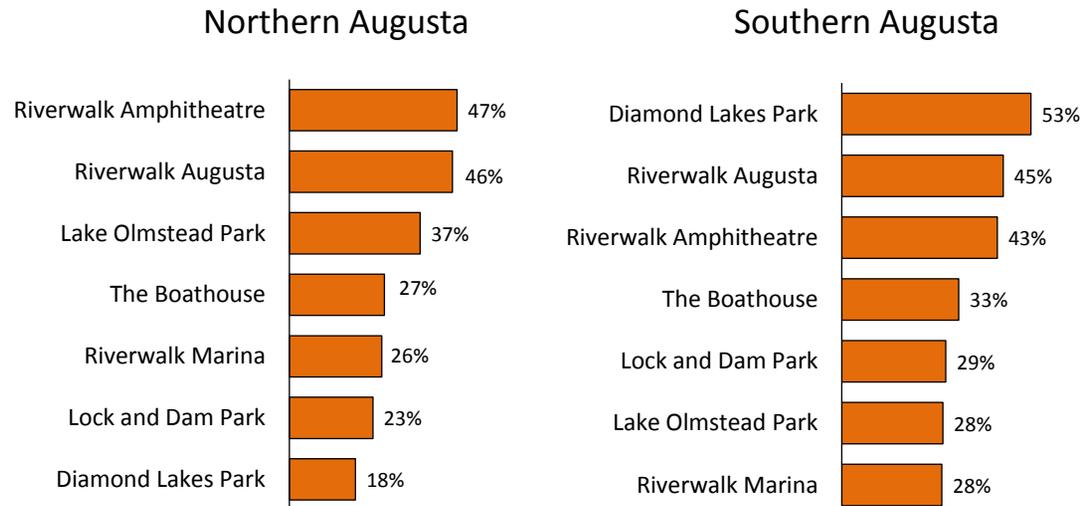


Source: CSL Community Survey, 2016

The preference for food and music-themed events is again suggested in these data. We also note the relatively high level of interest in all event types, with at least 41 percent of those younger than 35 giving a five rating for all event categories. Those older than 35 tended to show less of an interest in attending events, however respondents in this age group still rated each event activity at 32 percent or more with the exception of water events.

It is also important to consider the unique interests of residents from different areas of Augusta. What may appeal to residents in one part of the city may not draw as heavily those in other areas. The exhibit below compares North and South Augusta’s preferences for potential event locations and summarizes the percentage of each group that gave the selected sites a score of five (with five being the highest rating).

**Exhibit 13**  
**Comparison of Interest in Potential Event Areas by Geographic Origin**

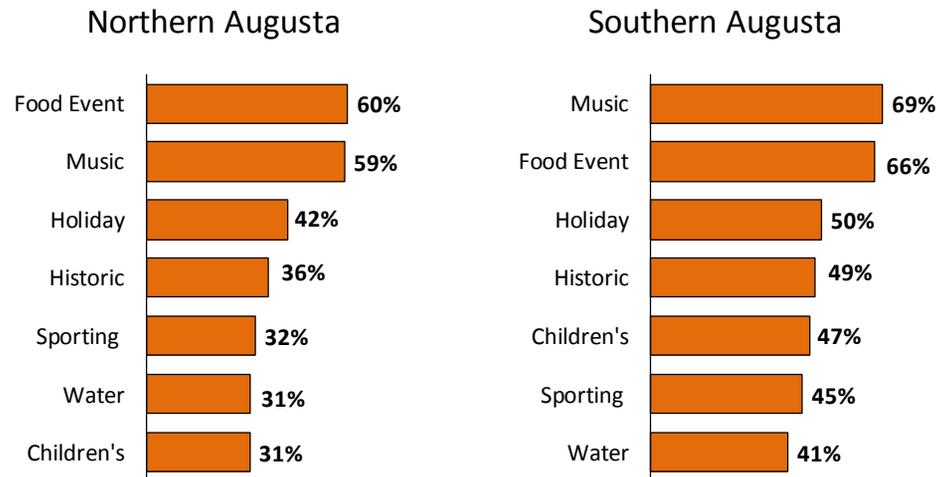


Note: Northern Augusta comprised of 30901, 30904, 30907, 30909 and 30813 zip codes  
Southern Augusta comprised of 30815 and 30907 zip codes  
Source: CSL Community Survey, 2016

Residents in different areas of the city have distinct preferences for attending events at particular park sites. Those from south Augusta rate Diamond Lakes Park highest, with significant interest in the Riverwalk and Riverwalk Amphitheater. Residents on the north side of the city rate the Riverwalk Amphitheater and Riverwalk as most preferred, followed by Lake Olmstead Park. The event preferences segmented by area of the city should be considered when developing future new event plans.

Further, geographical differences in event interest were also reviewed. The following exhibit compares the percentage of respondents that gave scores of five to the following event ideas from North and South Augusta.

**Exhibit 14**  
**Comparison of Interest in Event/Festival By Type – Comparison by Geographic Origin**

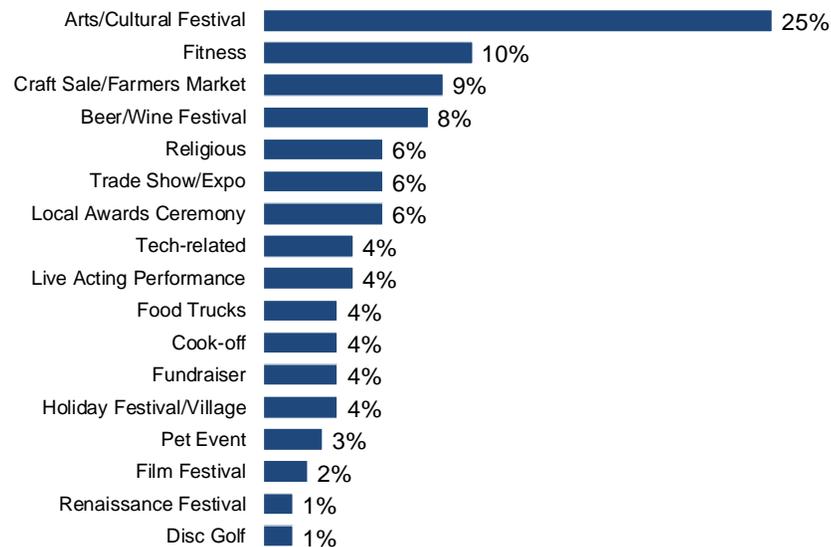


Note: Northern Augusta comprised of 30901, 30904, 30907, 30909 and 30813 zip codes  
Southern Augusta comprised of 30815 and 30907 zip codes  
Source: CSL Community Survey, 2016

South Augusta residents expressed considerably higher interest in all of the above event types, reinforcing the idea that it will be important to consider developing new events at more southern sites such as Diamond Lakes and Lock and Dam Park. Children’s events in particular were much more highly regarded by south Augusta respondents.

In addition to rating their interest in the aforementioned types of events, respondents were also asked to provide their own ideas for other events that could be developed in Augusta. These data reflect a broader, more varying array of ideas that helped inform consideration of several unique and/or signature components for new events discussed in the Recommendations section of this Plan. A summary of their suggestions is presented in the exhibit below.

### Exhibit 15 Residential Survey Results – Other Suggested Event Concepts



Source: CSL Community Survey, 2016

As shown, many respondents indicated interest in an arts/cultural festival. The high interest in arts/culture presents an opportunity to increase future attendance at the major arts festivals currently held in Augusta (Arts in the Heart and Westobou Festivals). In addition, the response indicates an opportunity to produce smaller, more neighborhood-focused arts events at park venues outside the downtown area.

Other popular ideas included events or festivals that were tied to health/fitness, beer/wine, religion, or technology, in addition to suggestions such as outdoor tradeshow/expos, live theatrical performances, food truck festivals, renaissance festivals, and cook-offs. Many of these suggestions have been successfully employed in markets that are comparable to Augusta, and some of the recommendations that were derived from these examples will be explored in detail later in this Plan.

## 5.0 COMPARABLE MARKETS ANALYSIS

This chapter provides an analysis of unique and/or notable event development initiatives in markets throughout the southeastern region and around the country. These markets and their events were identified and analyzed to provide examples of the various program components and resources that are involved in developing successful events, and should be considered as examples for local leadership to use to develop events for the city ranging from smaller neighborhood gatherings to large marquee events.

Moreover, the southeastern markets that were included in this review were determined to be comparable to Augusta due to one or more socioeconomic and/or geographic factors. An important component in assessing the success of potential new event activity in Augusta relates to the demographic and socioeconomic profile of the local market. To gain an understanding of the relative strength of the Augusta market area, it is useful to compare various demographic and socioeconomic characteristics among the comparable markets supporting event and/or festival activity.

The following exhibit provides a comparison of some of these key statistics for the population base within a 30-minute drive of each market's central business district (downtown) in order to place Augusta within a comparable market relative to Columbus, Georgia; Savannah, Georgia; Columbia, South Carolina; and Greenville, South Carolina.

## Exhibit 16 Comparable Markets Analysis - Demographic Comparison

	Augusta, GA	Greenville, SC	Columbia, SC	Columbus, GA	Savannah, GA	Comp Average
<b>Population Summary</b>						
2016 Total Population	437,073	616,752	581,605	325,232	320,733	461,081
2021 Total Population	457,646	663,110	618,587	342,657	345,717	492,518
2016-2021 Annual Rate	9.2%	14.6%	12.4%	10.5%	15.1%	13.2%
<b>2016 Households by Income</b>						
Household Income Base	167,405	237,161	225,115	123,886	120,492	176,664
Income less than \$50,000	51.9%	50.1%	48.4%	55.4%	52.1%	51.5%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	18.2%	18.0%	18.4%	18.3%	18.1%	18.2%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	11.8%	11.8%	12.5%	11.9%	12.2%	12.1%
Income \$100,000 and more	18.1%	20.0%	20.7%	14.5%	17.5%	18.2%
Average Household Income	\$65,125	\$67,727	\$69,480	\$59,554	\$65,330	\$65,523
<b>2016 Population by Age</b>						
0 - 14	19.9%	19.8%	18.4%	20.5%	19.6%	19.6%
15 - 24	13.6%	12.7%	16.8%	14.6%	15.2%	14.8%
25 - 44	26.6%	26.5%	27.3%	27.6%	28.3%	27.4%
45 - 64	25.6%	26.4%	24.7%	24.3%	23.4%	24.7%
65 - 74	8.7%	8.8%	7.9%	7.7%	8.1%	8.1%
75 +	5.7%	5.8%	5.1%	5.2%	5.4%	5.4%
<b>2016 Population by Race/Ethnicity</b>						
Total	437,073	567,088	581,605	325,232	320,733	448,665
White Alone	55.0%	74.1%	56.1%	53.0%	53.8%	59.3%
Black Alone	36.9%	16.9%	35.9%	38.6%	37.5%	32.2%
American Indian Alone	0.3%	0.3%	3.0%	0.5%	3.0%	1.7%
Asian Alone	2.4%	2.1%	2.6%	2.0%	2.7%	2.4%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.2%	1.0%	1.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%
Diversity Index	60.8	48.6	60.4	62.8	62.6	58.6
<b>Top 3 Tapestry Segments</b>						

As shown in the table above, Augusta's demographic make-up within a 30-minute drive of the city's downtown compares closely with the other markets. Its total population, average household income, population distribution by age range and overall level of diversity each closely proximate the comparable set's respective averages. This supports the notion that successful events in these comparable markets will have a strong chance at success in Augusta.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EVENT/FESTIVAL DEVELOPMENT

The recommendations presented in this Plan are based on the extensive research summarized herein. Suggested event concepts reflect the insights and opinions of local Augusta area leadership and over 930 local residents. In addition, CSL conducted analysis of unique event development opportunities in comparable markets across the country. This research, applied to the highly unique conditions that define the Augusta community, provides a foundation on which to develop recommendations for event themes and locations that would both enhance quality of life for residents, as well as the appeal of Augusta to visitors.

To begin the process of identifying event opportunities for each of the targeted sites, we have created a priority matrix, indicating how each site could be leveraged. Sites that were deemed very suitable for a given type of event are labeled as “Primary” opportunities. Sites that could hold smaller scale types of activity or act as a secondary event site for a citywide event are labeled as “Secondary” opportunities, and sites that could potentially host a given type of event activity but are not considered ideal due to one or more factors are labeled as “Limited”. Finally, areas of the matrix with no label reflect a lack of viability for an event type at a particular site.

**Exhibit 17**  
**Site Prioritization Matrix**

	Augusta Common	Jessye Norman Amphitheater	Riverwalk Marina	The Boathouse	Diamond Lakes Park	Lake Olmstead Park	Lock and Dam Park
<b>Music Events</b>	Primary	Primary	Limited		Secondary		Limited
<b>Food Events</b>	Primary			Limited	Secondary	Secondary	
<b>Arts/Culture Events</b>	Primary	Secondary	Limited	Secondary			
<b>Sporting Events</b>	Limited				Primary		Limited
<b>Water Events</b>			Primary	Primary		Secondary	Secondary
<b>Children's Events</b>	Secondary	Secondary			Secondary	Secondary	Primary
<b>Historic Celebrations</b>	Secondary				Secondary	Primary	Limited
<b>Holiday Events</b>	Limited	Limited		Limited	Secondary	Secondary	
<b>Other Events</b>	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Primary	Secondary	Secondary

As shown, Augusta Common should be considered a “Primary” venue for many different types of events and should continue to be used in some capacity for much of Augusta’s event activity. The Commons is a suitable location for eight of the nine recommended types of events. Diamond Lakes Park should continue as the “Primary” host site for sporting events, with potential for more frequent use by other types of events such as music events, food festivals, children’s events, holiday events and historic celebrations.

Sites that generated less interest from survey respondents, such as the Riverwalk Marina, Lock and Dam Park and The Boathouse, should not be considered for a large scale festival/event that would require substantial investment and partnerships, however they still have capacity to host more moderately sized event activity and should be considered as secondary or tertiary sites for large, citywide events that would feature multiple event/activity areas. These sites could also host small stand-alone events such as community/youth music events, barbeque/picnic events, neighborhoods arts events and other such events.

Within the broader event categories, this Plan will consider a variety of specific event types, including, but not limited to, the following:

- James Brown music festival
- Augusta University-sponsored indie rock festival in downtown
- Savannah River concert series
- Southern food and hospitality festival
- Craft beer and spirits festival
- Chili/barbeque cook-off’s
- A river-oriented public art festival
- Soccer/lacrosse/flag football/ultimate frisbee tournaments
- Holiday-themed river parade
- Family Halloween event
- African American heritage festival

The remainder of this section provides more specific discussion and recommendations regarding the potential development of events at each of the targeted sites. Detailed case studies are also referenced to showcase real world examples of creative and effective event/festival development in markets that are comparable to Augusta.

## *Music Events*

Augusta has several notable events that feature musical components such as the Arts in the Heart of Augusta Festival, the Candlelight Jazz Series and First Fridays. At the same time, local officials and the local resident survey results indicated that opportunity exists to add a new music-related event to Augusta’s event inventory. As previously discussed, a potential new music event or festival should be held primarily at Augusta Common, with the Jessye Norman Amphitheater and Lock and Dam Park considered for smaller scale concerts/festivals.

Importantly, nearly 74 percent of survey respondents 25 years old or younger indicated they would be “highly interested” in a new music event in the Augusta area.

### A James Brown Focus

Certainly, James Brown represents an essential element to the overall music culture in Augusta. Various events have and continue to be held that honor the Brown legacy, however none have risen to a level that reflects the potential of the concept.

Given the international influence of James Brown, we suggest that opportunities to create more of a marquee International Soul Festival exist and should be explored. Today, there are numerous entities that should be involved in planning such an effort, including family members, J.A.M.P.,

Augusta History Museum, local promoters, the city and private benefactors.

To go beyond the existing Birthday Bash concept, a one-year planning process will be needed, with seed money to fund administrative and outreach efforts. A five-year plan should be developed, with the understanding that the first several years of the event may generate lesser attendance levels as the event matures.

### A University-Sponsored Music Concept

To help create music event activity that reaches beyond the existing inventory of events held in Augusta, it is recommended that a partnership be established with both the administration and the student body of Augusta University to develop a festival and/or concert series. Drawing on these resources can help to produce an exciting millennial-focused, current music/entertainment event for the community.

For example, the Savannah College of Art and Design plays a prominent role in programming events and festivals in downtown Savannah’s central commons area, Forsyth Park.

A University-sponsored musical event could be held during key seasonal “gaps” that fall within the school year, and a spring concert series held in March or April, or a fall festival held in November should be considered. Due to their proximity to the University’s campus, Augusta Common and Jessye Norman Amphitheater should be considered primary host sites for the event.

### Other Music Concepts

To create unique music event opportunities that are not simply “more of the same”, the Savannah River, Lock and Dam Park should be considered for a smaller scale concert series. These events would be designed to raise awareness for the River, representing a potential “river awareness” music festival at Lock and Dam Park. Investment in in-ground electricity hook-ups and other grounds improvements should be prioritized in order to accommodate these events.

This concept is represented by the River Rocks Festival, a concert series on Columbia, South Carolina’s riverfront that raises awareness (and proceeds) for the local Congaree River (see case study).

Finally, a variety of youth/community oriented concerts should be considered for various neighborhood parks throughout the community. These events tend to draw more heavily from neighborhood surrounding the site, and can be often be family oriented, either with youth music groups, or acts that cater more to families.

#### River Rocks Festival (Columbia, South Carolina)



The River Rocks Festival in Columbia, South Carolina is organized by the Congaree Riverkeeper, a regional non-profit entity that maintains and educates the public about the Congaree River. The one-day

rock/bluegrass music festival is held at an eight-acre site along the River just outside of downtown. Riverkeeper officials estimate that the event attracts approximately 1,000 attendees per year and that 50 percent of these attendees come from outside the city’s limits. The event’s seventh installment will take place in April of 2017.

The event receives substantial funding from the city’s local hospitality tax collections, which are derived from a one percent tax on prepared foods in select entertainment “districts” across the city. The total cost of the event ranges from \$30,000 to \$40,000, and the remainder of its costs are covered by sponsorships from local and regional businesses. The Festival generates \$15,000 to \$25,000 in profit each year from the beer, food and ticket sales, and these funds are given to the Riverkeeper to help them maintain the River and educate the local community about its importance to the ecosystem.

### *Food Events*

According to local stakeholders and the resident survey results, a new food festival or food-related event would appeal to a broad demographic in Augusta. Sixty-one percent of all respondents indicated that they were highly interested in a food festival. When considering only residents 35 years and younger, this number increase to 79 percent, indicating a high degree of interest.

Referring to the site prioritization table on page 28, a largescale citywide food festival that invites regional and/or national chefs, restaurateur's and/or food writers and critics should be considered for a downtown park area. Augusta Common should be the designated central point for such event activities and could host tents for food sales, tastings and demonstrations. A future expansion of the Commons could greatly increase the capacity for this type of event.

A "Southern Hospitality" theme that focuses on southern cuisine/soul food should be considered for this type of citywide food festival. Such an event could include use of indoor venues such as The Boathouse and Julian Smith Casino (and potentially a redeveloped depot, should such a project take place) to house ancillary activities such as amateur cooking competitions and/or other demonstrations.

This type of community-wide event could be modeled after the Euphoria festival in Greenville, South Carolina which invites world-renowned chefs to cook and demonstrate at outdoor locations throughout the downtown for nearly a

week. The event was started by a renowned local restaurateur and attracts nearly 5,000 people from out of state each year. The event also includes a music component called "Songwriting Recipes" where well known songwriters host lectures about their musical approach to songwriting. Importantly, influential organizations such as local foundations and/or the city will have to support initial planning efforts. Partnerships will have to be developed with local chefs, restaurant owners, the University and other culinary participants to help attract sufficient critical mass to launch the event.

Secondly, with the emerging popularity of craft breweries, distilleries and wineries, local officials should explore opportunities to host a locally-oriented beer/spirits festival that would invite residents and visitors to pay a one-time admissions fee of \$30 to \$40 to enjoy beer/spirits samplings from dozens of beer/wine makers. This could be similar to the Uptown Beer and Wine Festival held in the middle of downtown Columbus, Georgia. This type of event could be held at a more secondary site, such as Lake Olmstead Park or The Boathouse.

This type of event would likely appeal to younger Augusta residents including those based at Fort Gordon or attending Augusta University. At the same time, representatives from Uptown Columbus indicated that the event draws a nearly equal number of younger attendees and baby boomers.

**Uptown Beer and Wine Festival (Columbus, Georgia)**



Started in 2009 by the Uptown Columbus, Inc. Business Improvement District, the Uptown Beer and Wine Festival is a one-day event that takes place at Rankin Courtyard in central downtown Columbus. The event features over 100 local

and national craft beer makers in addition to live music. In recent years, the event has added 25 selections of white and red wines and now invites local downtown restaurants to set up temporary booths and provide food times that make complimentary pairings with the various beers and wines.

Attendees must purchase a \$35 ticket to participate and enjoy each of the wine and beer samplings, and it nets \$25,000 in profit for Uptown Columbus. The event costs approximately \$3,000 to organize and operate, and the beer and wine vendors supply their wine for free as the event is viewed as a significant marketing opportunity. In total, the event drew just over 1,200 attendees in 2016, with 90 percent of this figure comprising of local residents of Columbus.

Finally, it is also recommended to invest in developing smaller neighborhood-oriented picnics and barbeques in pocket parks and green spaces throughout the city.

*Arts/Culture Events*

As previously noted, just over 25 percent of respondents to the Local Resident survey suggested the development of an arts- or culture-related event in Augusta. It is important to note that this type of event was not included as specific event option, rather respondents raised the desire for an art/culture event as part of the open-ended questions.

The Greater Augusta Arts Council Public Art Master Plan, a guideline for public art development prepared concurrently with this Plan, provides recommendations regarding the development of additional arts and culture events in the area. These events and festivals represent an opportunity to more strongly tie Augusta’s brand with unique art and culture, attract spending from out of town visitors, and act as a fundraising mechanism for arts-related organizations in the community.

Many stakeholders and survey respondents recommended the development of a more high-end fine arts festival, while others suggested developing an art auction that would raise funds for the GAAC and other local art entities. To better define these types of concepts, the case studies presented below and on the following pages present valuable teaching points for arts event development.

With existing art-related events such as the GAAC’s Arts in the Heart of Augusta Festival and the more recently developed Westobou Festival, Augusta already has a strong inventory of events that tie its brand to arts and culture.

However, opportunity exists to potentially further develop these events and/or create new events that would advocate and fundraise for public art programs in Augusta.

The GAAC and Recreation and Parks Department should collaborate with other local and non-local organizations to develop event concepts that have been successfully introduced in Columbus, Scottsdale and Little Rock. Potential event elements to consider are listed below.

- Citywide temporary public art installations– Issue a call to artists from around the region or country to participate in an event similar to Finding Time in Columbus (see case study) in which artists would be given several weeks to develop and install large scale public art installations throughout Augusta. A weeklong public event that also includes food and live music could then be held as the artists finish their works, with artists engaging with community members to educate them about their work and influences.
- Develop an educational component – Invite the participation of schools and colleges from around Richmond County or the state of Georgia offering workshops or seminars with the event’s participating artists.
- Include art auction – Develop a high-end arts auction patterned after the Fine Art Sculpture Show and Sale in Little Rock, Arkansas. The proceeds from auction sales help to support the event and fund the development of public art in the city. These auctions

could take place within the indoor venues at Lake Olmstead Park or The Boathouse, or outdoors along the Riverwalk and/or the shores of Lock and Dam Park.

**Finding Time (Columbus, Ohio)**

Championed by a board member of the Columbus Arts Commission (who was also a professor at Ohio State University) Finding Time was an event designed to educate the people of Columbus about the importance and capabilities of public art. Thirteen temporary public art installations based on the theme of “time” were set up across the 360 acres that comprise downtown Columbus, with over 50 artists contributing to their development. Of note, these artists freely began to work together to design and complete projects; these organic interactions transformed many of the installations into more imaginative and engaging art pieces. To help attract top talent, the Arts Commission solicited the services of the local art museum to curate artists.

Finding Time was primarily organized by the Columbus Arts Commission and the Ohio State Art Department, though other local organizations such as CID (Crossroads/Discovery Special Improvement District), the city, the local art museum and others played a significant role in organizing and managing the event. It was primarily funded by grants from Ohio State (\$60,000) and the NEA Our Town program (\$150,000).

- Include amateur event – Invite local or regional artists to create and showcase culturally inspired art. This could include a competitive component that would invite the general public to vote on winning entries, and the winning submissions could be installed permanently or temporarily at a location within the Augusta River Region.

- Incorporate laser/light shows and technology - consider recruiting the assistance of TheClubhouse or other agents from the city's growing tech sector to incorporate light and/or laser show dynamics with existing arts events or new public art-related events.

Importantly, a potential new arts and culture-related event should be downtown-based and should encourage people to walk throughout the downtown area and the proximate Riverwalk, Marina and Boathouse.

### *Sporting Events*

As indicated by the analysis of existing events in the selected park areas, Diamond Lakes Park is the primary host site for baseball and softball games and tournaments. Local officials state that they are very satisfied with the level of this type of activity at Diamond Lakes. However, the Augusta Sports Council and other local officials should continue to pursue more economically impactful regional and national youth tournaments. The recent hosting of the 2016 USSSA Military World Series in Augusta generated significant economic benefits for the community, and attracting other similar high profile events should be prioritized and supported by local officials. With Diamond Lakes Park's inventory of ten diamond fields, potential exists to attract more regional and national baseball/softball events such as those organized by Babe Ruth and Little League. Further, opportunities to

develop more locally-oriented adult amateur softball leagues and/or tournaments should be explored.

According to survey results, there is moderate interest among residents for new sporting events in Augusta. Many communities around the country have developed ultimate Frisbee, disc golf and flag football leagues to encourage their residents to frequent their local outdoor spaces. These types of activities should be considered for the selected park areas with substantial open space (but very little permanent sporting facilities) such as Lake Olmstead Park or Lock and Dam Park.

Other sporting events such as Iron Man are well suited for the downtown area, but officials should consider drawing a traveling outdoor fitness event such as Mud Runner or Warrior Dash, a 15,000-participant obstacle course that takes place on a five-mile trail. Lock and Dam Park could potentially serve as a start/finish site for such an event.

CSL also developed a citywide Destination Development Strategic Plan for the Augusta Convention and Visitors Bureau that was prepared concurrently with this Plan. As part of the study effort, state and regional "rectangle" field organizations were contacted to gather their insights and opinions on the Augusta market.

According to soccer, lacrosse and football tournament planners, if investments were made to develop up to six full-sized fields in combination with the existing field inventory, opportunity exists to attract large soccer/football tournaments

to the area. Representatives from these organizations also suggested the development of two full-sized turf fields, with lights on a majority of the fields, and covered bleacher seating for 500 on a designated championship field.

### *Water Events*

Thirty-three percent of resident survey respondents indicated that they were highly interested in a new water event in Augusta (rating of 5), an important concept for a city that features several water-based attractions/amenities. Events such as the Southern Nationals Drag Boat Race on the Savannah River and the Dragon Boat Festival and U.S. Southeast Regional Rowing Regatta on Lake Olmstead help attract visitors to the city, representing opportunities to promote these attractive park areas.

To complement the existing large-scale water based events currently held in Augusta, we suggest the development of a more arts and culture related event that showcases the River, Lake and/or Canal, and better educates the public about these assets. This concept was discussed briefly in the Art and Culture section of this Plan, with components that could include the following.

- Artist competition, with a mechanism for residents throughout the community to vote on the winning submissions.
- An auction of art pieces to generate financial support for the event.
- Temporary installations throughout the community, and even on the water.
- A music component featuring local and regional artists.

Another water-based event concept could be developed around the concept of an on-the-water parade, similar to Savannah’s Holiday Boat Parade of Lights. Spectators could watch an exciting holiday-themed light parade during the night that could also feature ancillary elements such as a Christmas village, a Santa station and other components. Importantly, this type of holiday concept does not have to be limited to a Christmas theme, but could be celebrated during various other shoulder periods during the calendar year.

**Annual Boat Parade of Lights – (Savannah, Georgia)**

In its 16<sup>th</sup> year in 2016, the Annual Boat Parade of Lights is Savannah’s signature holiday kickoff event and occurs the weekend after Thanksgiving of each year. The event features 30 to 40 parading boats that are decorated by holiday-themed light displays and includes the city’s second largest annual fireworks display. In recent years, the event has also featured a holiday-themed light show that is projected on the riverfront Westin Tower. The event is funded and managed by the Savannah Harbor Foundation, a local organization made up of area business leaders. In 2016, the event attracted just over 2,500 attendees. Since 2001, the event has raised more than \$400,000 for charities in the region from admission and food/beverage revenues.

The Boat Parade is the first of a series of holiday events that occur on Savannah’s riverfront. Other activities include Santa’s Workshop, a temporary North Pole Ice Bar, the Gingerbread Village and nightly programming provided by local non-profits.



*Children’s Events*

Fifty percent of survey respondents indicated that they would be interested in a children’s event in Augusta, and 36 percent expressed significant levels of interest (based on their rating of five out of five regarding the concept). Many survey respondents also remarked that Augusta lacks family-oriented events and festivals, which mirrors comments made by local stakeholders and other interviewed parties regarding Augusta’s general lack of child-friendly attractions and activities.

**Picnic In The Park (Savannah, Georgia)**

Founded 30 years ago and operated by the Savannah Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus and the City of Savannah’s Department of Cultural Affairs, the annual Picnic in the Park is a free family-oriented musical event that takes place in Savannah’s central



commons area, Forsyth Park. Each year, voting takes place on Facebook to determine the theme and slogan for that year’s Picnic. “Under the Stars and Stripes” was the event’s theme in 2016, and it included a patriotic picnic table contest in addition to red, white and blue-colored decorations. The local Army Color Guard also made an appearance in the event’s most recent year and provided cannons for its grand finale musical performance.

Approximately 15,000 people attend the Picnic each year, and it takes place over one day in early October of each year. Total costs approximate \$4,000, which includes \$500 needed to rent the Park’s band shell and the approximate \$3,500 required to hire police security.

Children-oriented events tend to have a more limited, local draw, therefore park locations in areas with younger families should be considered. Use of underutilized space such as Lock and Dam Park could also be considered.

A family picnic similar to Savannah’s Picnic in the Park (see case study to left) should be considered. This would consist of an evening event that invites families from across the community to bring food and blankets and enjoy a night under the sunset and stars. The event would feature a different, exciting theme each year, and could include performances by local arts- and performance-related organizations in Augusta such as the Symphony Orchestra, Augusta Players, and local youth bands.

Moreover, local non-profits should be invited to set up exhibits and/or activity stations that could educate attendees on subjects that are tied to the event’s theme. The event’s annually changing theme should feature several options to choose from that are decided on by a public input on social media, with a youth vote that determines the winning concept for that year.

**Spooktacular (Columbus, Georgia)**



Run by the Uptown Columbus, Inc. Business Improvement District, the Columbus State University Student Government Association, and Muscogee Moms (a local private organization that connects families with family-oriented entertainment in the Columbus area), Spooktacular takes place in the central commons area of downtown Columbus (Rankin Courtyard). Exhibitors (local businesses) are recruited by Uptown Columbus, Inc. while the University students help with event set-up and labor.

The festival features a costume contest for kids in addition to “mini-games” and activities for attendees of all ages to enjoy. The one-day event attracts an estimated total of 3,000 attendees, 90 percent of which are local residents, and its planners reported that it costs a total of \$2,000 to run. This cost is comprised of the \$1,200 that is needed to buy candy and supplies and the \$800 required to hire police security.

In regards to Augusta’s existing event calendar, there is a relative lack of event activity during the late fall and early spring months. Consideration should therefore be given to the development of an additional kids-oriented Halloween event. This type of event could take place at Lock and Dam Park or several other of the previously suggested sites. The Halloween event in Columbus, Georgia (see case study to right) invites local businesses and non-profits to set up booths and give away candy, and the event features a costume contest near the heart of the city’s downtown. Columbus representatives noted that the event is very cost effective for the level of attendance it generates. Augusta Common, Lake Olmstead Park, Diamond Lakes Park, Lock

and Dam Park could be a potential site for such an event due to the amounts of green space they each offer.

### *Historic Celebrations*

Survey respondents expressed moderate to significant interest in developing new historic celebrations in Augusta, with 62 percent rating the concept with a score of four or five (out of five). Fortunately, Augusta features a rich history of cultural, industrial and artistic significance – a variety of content exists for developing a relevant theme and message that could tie to a potential new event.

Many survey respondents and local stakeholders interviewed in person expressed the need for a large scale celebration of the city’s African American heritage. Several events with this type of theme already exist in Augusta, but they take place at smaller venues such as the Sacred Heart Cultural Center or the Lucy Laney Craft Museum.

To build a larger African American heritage event, local officials in Augusta should emulate the Annual Statewide Black History Parade and Educational Festival in Columbia, South Carolina (see case study to right). Local officials in Columbia noted the importance of the event’s mandate that each exhibitor (local businesses) needs to concurrently educate event attendees about a lesser known figure in African American history. Local businesses responded to this by selling custom merchandise such as water bottles,

action figures and posters that featured the likeness of the historical figure they chose to represent.

This type of unique event component has sparked significant interest in the Festival as well as African American history. It will be important to designate a local non-profit and/or foundation to procure seed funding for such an event and to serve as the “quarterback” for recruiting the participation of local businesses.

#### **Annual Statewide Black History Parade and Festival (Columbia, South Carolina)**

Columbia’s Annual Statewide Black History Parade and Festival is founded and organized by Funds Inc., a local non-profit. The event is held in Martin Luther King Park, a 5.3-acre park that features an onsite community center.

The Festival typically features 10 to 15 local/regional food vendors and 20 to 25 local/regional merchant vendors, in addition to several gospel, jazz and/or r and b live musical acts. Though these vendors still sell their own products, event management requires each exhibitor to feature an educational component about a specific figure in African American history. For example, an exhibitor can distribute pamphlets that provides biographical information about their selected figure’s life, or they can sell custom-made product such as key chains or water bottles that feature their figure’s likeness on them. The event costs anywhere between \$5,000 to \$10,000 to run per year, with advertising, parade float production and sound/staging equipment comprising most of these figures. The event attracts approximately 2,000 people, 30 percent of which are from out of town, including each of the African American mayors from around the state of South Carolina.

This type of event would be well suited in Lake Olmstead Park. The event in Columbia utilizes Martin Luther King Park and its onsite community center about a mile outside of the city's core, and its parade traverses from the park into the downtown. This same type of festival/parade configuration could be developed between Lake Olmstead and downtown Augusta. Moreover, the combination of the outdoor areas around the Lake and Julian Smith Casino would enable the event to host activities and exhibitors both indoors and outdoors.

Moreover, event planners should consider inviting local arts organizations to work on paintings, sculptures and other forms of art that are based on African American historical figures, and these could be displayed within an onsite indoor venue. Live musical performances should be included outdoors using the Lake as a backdrop.

### *Holiday Events*

As noted in previous sections, several holiday events should be pursued in Augusta. A children-oriented Halloween event and a Christmas river parade would both better activate the park areas in which they take place, and would fill "need areas" in the calendar year during which very little event activity takes place.

Moreover, local stakeholders and survey respondents noted that a New Year's Eve event in Augusta Common or along the Augusta Riverwalk should be considered in which a large

scale, lighted installation could serve as the central piece for a large outdoor celebration and eventual countdown to midnight. This event could be similar to the Famously Hot New Year event held in Columbia, South Carolina which takes place throughout the city's downtown and attracted over 35,000 to the downtown in 2015. Local officials estimate that nearly 75 percent of these attendees came from outside the city of Columbia. The event features high quality musical acts on its headline concert stage, which is situated next to an extravagant Christmas tree and dynamic laser light displays. When the clock hits midnight, the downtown is enveloped by a fireworks display.

### *Other Events*

As noted previously, survey respondents were asked to provide open ended suggestions as to other types of events that should be considered for the community. Several ideas were frequently mentioned, including an arts/culture event (previously discussed herein), fitness events, more craft sales/farmers markets, a beer/wine festival (also previously discussed), live theatrical performances, and a renaissance festival, among others.

These more community-oriented events could serve well to broaden the current calendar of activity held at the targeted parks. None of these would require significant financial investment, rather the need for staff time to plan and host the events will have to be addressed. The Recreation and Parks Department should work with local community groups to

create an action plan for these types of events, with the Department (and/or other public/private entities) providing modest financial support, as well as assistance in set-up, tear-down and cleaning efforts. The city will also have to work with these groups to help navigate the needed insurance, permitting and other administrative aspects of event hosting.

Based on our case study review, we have identified two concepts that are illustrative of these types of community events. In Palm Springs, a fitness festival is produced that combines marquee features such as organic foods and craft beers with fitness competitions (see case study). In Ashfield, Massachusetts, a citywide outdoor “fringe festival” (see case study) could be considered for Augusta. As part of the event, the selected park areas would each host live theatrical performances and lectures throughout a given week during the year.

**Palm Springs International Health and Fitness Festival – (Palm Springs, California)**

The Palm Springs International Health and Wellness Festival is a 3-day interactive and educational festival showcasing sustainable and holistic living with a low cost \$5.00 admission. The inaugural event was held at the Palm Springs Air Museum in November 2015, and is intended to showcase Palm Springs as a world leader in health fitness. Event planners estimate attendance in the first year approximated 7,500 attendees, but fully expect it to grow to over 20,000 within ten years and foresee moving to the Palm Springs Convention Center to accommodate the growth.

Some of the unique aspects of the Festival include an adult obstacle course, a bicycle agility course, NFL player autograph signings, craft beer offerings, healthy food samplings from local restaurants, and educational seminars.

**Ashfield Town Spectacle – (Ashfield, Massachusetts)**



Ashfield’s local theater organization, Double Edge Theatre, partnered with the Town of Ashfield to engage community members in the growth of the town’s social and economic identity through a Summer Spectacle performance series. This series involved a number of outdoor concerts, pageants, educational programming and theatrical performances at select common areas, parks and farms located throughout the town. Specific examples of site activities included town meetings and events, excerpts from current performances at the local theaters, open theatre trainings, and music sharing events. The Spectacle’s primary purposes included rejuvenating outdoor public areas throughout the city and better engaging the community with the arts.

### *Final Notes*

Each of the recommended event concepts discussed herein share a number of infrastructural and labor requirements that need to be considered for each park area. These elements include:

- Infrastructural improvements such as in-ground electricity and built-in footings for tents should be added to open spaces in order to quickly and efficiently set up for events with music or seminar components.
- Agreements with the local police force to provide security around and throughout a given event during event activity and event tear down periods.
- Partnership with Augusta University and local area schools to receive low cost labor and/or marketing assistance from young, talented volunteers in the city.
- Buy-in from other local entities such as Augusta CVB, the Downtown Development Authority, Walton Foundations, Greater Augusta Arts Council and their willingness to fill ancillary roles to assist the marketing and operations of potential new events.
- Partnerships with transportation entities such as local taxi companies, Lyft, Uber and/or Southstar Trolley to ensure efficient and safe rides to and from event locations. For instance, Lyft will partner with event planners to set up “low cost ride zones” within the

perimeter of events and market this opportunity to Lyft users in the area to incentivize them to attend the event.

- A community planning process should be initiated to draw stakeholders from throughout the community to more specifically identify theming, timing, location, sponsorship potential, marketing initiatives and other aspects for a new event.