

VISIT MACON

EV25

annual report

macon
GEORGIA



LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

Looking back over our Fiscal Year 2025, I am appreciative of the opportunity to lead Visit Macon. I am also excited about our overall results, as well as, the future of tourism in Macon-Bibb County. Our hospitality industry in Macon supports over **4,800 jobs** and generates **over \$12 million in local taxes**. Hotel-motel taxes in 2024 set a record for the **4th** consecutive year!

Hotel motel tax collections support operations for 11 Macon-Bibb County entities including Visit Macon. The continued growth was supported by two of Macon's newest attractions: **Rhythm and Rally** — as well as the **Atrium Health Amphitheater**. Both continue to surpass predictions with national tournaments and acts which have introduced new visitors to our destination.

Calendar year 2025 got off to a powerful beginning as Mayor Lester Miller and Macon brought the "**Boom**" with the New Year's Day demolition event of the former Hilton Hotel. The initiative makes room for future development throughout the corridor including **new hotel and convention space** as well as a **new arena**. Visit Macon continued to stay busy in FY25 with the acquisition of both **Rock Candy Tours** and **Creek Media** – further cementing Macon's **Music City brand**.

I am grateful to Macon-Bibb County, the Visit Macon Board of Directors, our Visit Macon team and all our wonderful partners for creating a destination for the future in Macon... and for Georgia!

GARY WHEAT

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Gary Wheat.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Visit Macon is to unify and lead our community in marketing the Macon-Bibb County area as a superior visitor and meeting destination. We do this by promoting Macon, Georgia to travel writers, meeting planners, group tour operators and leisure travelers in an effort to bring people and revenue into the community and area businesses.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$6,646,182.96

RECORD
HOTEL-MOTEL
TAX COLLECTION



6.8%

INCREASE
OVER LAST
YEAR

VISITOR MARKETS BY CITY

- 1 ATLANTA
- 2 TAMPA/ST. PETE
- 3 ORLANDO/DAYTONA
- 4 SAVANNAH
- 5 JACKSONVILLE

\$476.1m 4,860

**TOTAL VISITOR
SPENDING IN 2024**

UP 3.9% FROM 2023

**TOURISM
RELATED JOBS**

\$602

**HOUSEHOLD
TAX SAVINGS**



**TAKING AWAY THE
VISITOR ECONOMY
WOULD COST
EACH HOUSEHOLD
\$8,393 MORE
PER YEAR**

**FOR EVERY \$1
THAT VISITORS
SPEND AT A HOTEL**

\$5.60

**ARE SPENT IN
OUR COMMUNITY**

UP \$1.47 FROM 2023



**TOP 5
VISITOR
MARKETS
BY STATE**

Visit Macon acquired Creek Media LLC - 100.9 The Creek - as a tool to expand its marketing reach. The Creek, especially with its streaming capabilities, offers great opportunity to speak to listeners worldwide about Macon as a destination.

**CREEK
MEDIA**



NEW & NOTABLE

NEW & NOTABLE



In partnership with Mercer University and Macon-Bibb County, Visit Macon applied to be a Team Base Camp for a visiting country for the FIFA World Cup 2026™. Through conversation with FIFA and multiple site visits, Macon was selected as a Base Camp site for LAFC in the FIFA Club World Cup 2025™. **Macon was rated as the best pitch** for that event, and work is underway to bolster Macon's position to host a country and its fans for the **FIFA World Cup 2026™ Atlanta**.

EVENTS

EVENT GROWTH Continued to enhance existing community-based events that appeal to visitors, including highly targeted geofencing. This resulted in an increase of visitation for the 2025 Cherry Blossom Festival and Key Insights include: **\$6.5 million in economic impact**, welcoming **201,027 unique visitors**, a 7.2% increase compared to last year, 35.1% of total spending emanated from out-of-town visitors, the festival attracted 41,287 visitors from over 50 miles away, and 34.1% of attendees traveled from states beyond Georgia. The 2024/25 Macon Christmas Light Extravaganza saw an **economic impact of \$7.1 million** and **over 685,000 visitors**. Highlights include: Visitors spent an average of \$139.47 per trip, 52% of attendees stayed for more than one day, with significant numbers from Florida and Alabama, Saturdays were the most popular for those traveling from over 50 miles away, and 45.8% of visitors came from households of 3-5 people.

MUSIC VENUE HIGHLIGHT The first year of the Atrium Health Amphitheater saw more than a dozen shows, and an economic value to the community **exceeding \$1 million per show**. By the end of the 2024 calendar year, the Amphitheatre had hosted 22 shows and attracted over 100,000 fans. Total spending tied to those shows exceeded **\$20 million** across Macon-Bibb County. That's roughly \$200 per attendee!

KAZOO In partnership with the National Kazoo Museum in Beaufort, South Carolina, Visit Macon engaged the original designers and curators of that museum to bring a fun, new pop-up exhibit to the Tubman African American Museum. The exhibit timing fell during February/Black History Month and continued to garner attention and promotional ties into Macon's International Cherry Blossom Festival, where on March 28th, a Guinness World Record attempt was advertised to achieve the World's Largest Kazoo ensemble. While the record fell short, the earned media efforts contributed to a massive influx in visitation and attention paid to this year's festival, with earned media & press outreach efforts producing over **\$11.5 million in Ad Value Equivalency**. Coverage of the Kazoos' ties to Macon, Georgia's musical heritage reached an audience of **over 1.14 billion unique visitors per month**.





IN THE PRESS

Another record-breaking year of successes amplifying Macon, Georgia, in the National press. This year's efforts resulted in numerous articles in publications such as:

GARDEN & GUN MAGAZINE | SOUTHERN LIVING
AAA TRAVELER | HGTV | FODOR'S TRAVEL
TRAVEL+LEISURE | GOOD HOUSEKEEPING
BBC | WALL STREET JOURNAL | USA TODAY

110 1.77B

PIECES OF COVERAGE IMPRESSIONS

\$24.3m

AD VALUE EQUIVALENCY
UP FROM \$6.7M FROM FY24

FILM

SUPERMAN filmed in Macon in 2024 and was released in July.

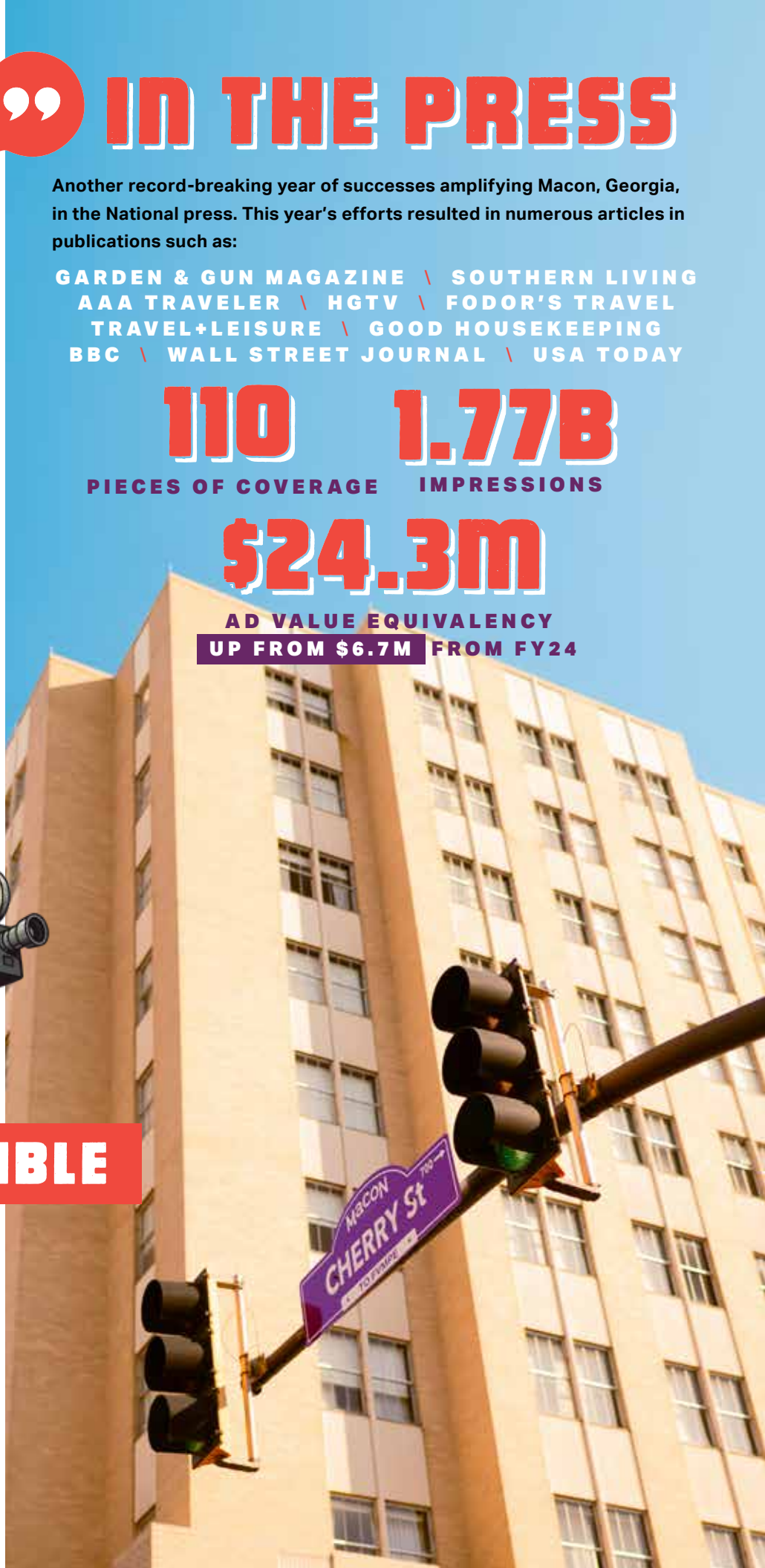
TULSA KING filmed in Macon multiple times during the show's third season.

Macon partnered with the Georgia Film Office & other communities to showcase at the **American Film Market**.



NEW & NOTABLE

Through a donation from Chris Sheridan and partnership with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Macon-Bibb County, Visit Macon oversaw the development and installation of **new street signs** in Downtown Macon. These signs are purple to tie in with Visit Macon's brand, and feature the Muscogee (Creek) translation of the street names.



MARKETING

VIDEO Continued production of multiple video series, including **Macon Music** (music heritage), **Macon PlayList** (attractions), and **OrderUp!** (food/restaurant) resulting in **over 1 million streams**. The Macon Music series was recognized as a **Gold Winner** award in the "Series: Travel & Tourism" category at the **46th Telly Awards** and was awarded a **Destiny Award from the U.S. Travel Association**. Also launched a new video series in coordination with a strategic seasonal campaign called **Macon Beyond**, which was named a finalist for Best Seasonal Destination Marketing Campaign at the 2025 eTSY Awards – Tourism's Digital Trailblazers.

SOCIAL MEDIA Visit Macon concluded the 2024 calendar year with **17%** growth in followers, serving **11,941,127 impressions**, saw 1,010,313 engagements with content, and 271,465 clicks to the visitmacon.org website.

WEBSITE VisitMacon.org saw over **1.3 million views** on our website, and the hotel booking platform produced 61 reservations, generating **\$14,131.14** in revenue.

**NOMINATED FOR THE
2025 MUSIC CITIES
AWARDS:**

BEST GLOBAL

**MUSIC
CITY**

BY SOUND DIPLOMACY

DIGITAL Launched a new Direct-to-Book digital advertising campaign with Adara. From March through May, the digital ads produced **187 bookings** and 2,402 searches. Resulting in **\$41,522** in revenue, an ADR of \$125.07, and a **2.3:1 ROI**. These results are extremely conservative because Adara only pulls conversion metrics from Marriott, Choice, and Wyndham hotels, and there is zero modeling or estimating. Other brand properties producing conversions from the same campaign are not included, and extremely likely, given the success of the scope that we can report.

MUSIC TOURISM Hosted the **Macon Music Revue** preservation band to multiple locations and promoted the release of their first-ever self-titled record released in late August, now available on all streaming channels worldwide. Event performances included: Travel South Int'l Tourism Conference (ATL), Online News Association Conference (ATL), Georgia's Governors Conference on Tourism, Macon Day at the Capital, Nashville's Americanafest, Oxford American event in North Little Rock, and a Back Porch Session at Garden & Gun Magazine in Charleston, SC.

**The
soul of
Macon**

CONVENTION SALES

IN 2025 TO DATE, CONVENTION
SALES HAS GENERATED:

+\$8.5m ECONOMIC
IMPACT

+16K 
OVER GOAL
DEFINITE ROOM NIGHTS

Exceeded all annual sales goals, surpassing our
definite room nights target **by 7%** and generating
over 16K room nights.

Contributions to our FY25 successes include:

- Hosted two weekends of the Jehovah's Witness Congregations, generating an economic impact of over **\$3.8 million**.
- Continued partnership with the Future Farmers of America, hosting their 2025 Annual State Convention with an economic impact of over **\$1.3 million**.
- Hosted several new groups such as Delta Sigma Theta's Annual conference (**\$697K+** in economic impact), the Georgia Chamber of Commerce Executives, Groundswell Clean Energy Organization, Miss Black GA USA Pageant, and many more.
- Welcomed back returning groups such as The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge (**\$921K+** economic impact), The Veterans of Foreign Wars (**\$352K+** economic impact), The Order of the Eastern Star (**\$345K+** economic impact), and the Rainbow Girls of GA (**\$326K+** economic impact), just to name a few.
- Represented Macon at four sales conferences, meeting with convention planners to attract new business.



SPORTS

IN 2025 TO DATE, SPORTS
DEVELOPMENT HAS PRODUCED:

+\$13.8m ECONOMIC
IMPACT



\$4.5m



\$3.9m



\$906K



\$480K

Surpassed all annual sales goals, exceeding definite room nights target by **12%**, and generating **over 14K room nights**.

Contributions to our FY25 successes include:

- Maintained partnership with GHSA to host their Cheer, Wrestling, and Basketball State Championships, generating a total of over **\$6 million** in economic impact.
- Supported 14 MATA and MyAd tennis tournaments, generating over **\$4.5 million** in economic impact.
- Supported **11** of Rhythm and Rally's Pickleball Tournaments, generating over **\$3.9 million** in economic impact.
- Hosted six softball and baseball tournaments generating over **\$906,000** in economic impact.
- Hosted the largest collegiate boxing tournament in the country, the U.S. Intercollegiate Boxing Association National Tournament generating over **\$480,000** in economic impact.
- Attended Connect Marketplace to represent Macon and met with sports planners from all over the country.





DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

2025 INTERCITY TOUR TO BALTIMORE

Visit Macon partnered with NewTown Macon to plan and execute the annual trip for Macon's leaders to visit Baltimore, Maryland. The cities share ideas about tourism development, youth engagement, crime reduction, entrepreneurial ecosystems, neighborhood revitalization and enjoyed networking amongst our Macon leaders.

PREFERRED PARTNER PROGRAM

The Preferred Partner program continues to grow and thrive! Visit Macon's website continues to be a very attractive feature to recruit Partners, as well as our continued appearances in numerous National publications. The Preferred Partner program currently boasts 90 businesses/organizations, that's an increase of over 25% from last fiscal year!

SOUTHEAST TOURISM SOCIETY'S MARKETING COLLEGE

For the 6th year in a row, Macon has hosted this continuing education experience for tourism professionals from 14 different states across the Southeast. STS creates the curriculum, and classes take place at Mercer University. Attendees have the option of dorm accommodations or hotels. Visit Macon's role is to provide local logistics expertise, venue, catering and entertainment assistance. We also provide a small amount of financial support.

ONLINE NEWS ASSOCIATION

Visit Macon coordinated a customized FAM tour for journalists attending the Online News Association conference, sponsored by the Knight Foundation. The conference took place in Atlanta and the time in Macon was an opportunity for journalists to learn more about Knight's investment in Macon. We hosted six journalists representing Better to Speak, The Field Foundation of Illinois, Radio Free Asia, Northwestern University, NBC Universal, Oita Prefectural College in Oita, Japan, and Knight Foundation. They visited Ocmulgee Mounds, McEachern Arts, Capricorn Studios, Beall's Hill, Tubman Museum, and learned about a variety of downtown revitalization projects.

DESTINATION AUGUSTA VISITS MACON

Forty-one members Augusta's leadership came to Macon to learn about the vision for our community and how we put that vision into action. Augusta's day included a panel discussion at Atrium Health Amphitheater with Gary Wheat, Alex Morrison and David Aiello, a visit and tour at Rhythm & Rally, a bus tour of the Eisenhower-BID, a breakout lunch at four downtown restaurants, meet-ups for Destination Augusta and their Visit Macon counterparts, a visit to Triangle Arts, a tour at Ocmulgee Mounds hearing from Tracie Revis and Seth Clark and finally a reception at High Tales roof top bar at Hotel Forty Five with Macon's leaders.

INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS/ TRAVEL SOUTH INT'L SHOWCASE

Twelve international tour operators came to Macon at the end of the Travel South Showcase in Atlanta. We developed their itinerary to include places of specific interest to travelers from outside the U.S. They visited Ocmulgee Mounds, Capricorn Studio, Piedmont Grand Opera House, Hay House, Hotel Forty-Five, Otis Redding Center for the Arts, Grant's Lounge and the Christmas Light Extravaganza.

CEC AUDIO ENGINEERING SOCIETY

Hosted audio engineering students from Coweta Co public schools when they visited Capricorn, Grants, Capitol Theater, The Grand, 100.9 The Creek and Shadow Sound Studio to learn more about jobs in the music industry.

FAYETTEVILLE MARKSMEN FANS

In partnership with the Macon Mayhem, we developed a weekend of fun for Fayetteville Marksmen season ticket holders to visit Macon for a weekend of hockey games vs the Mayhem. They explored downtown, enjoyed lunch on the rooftop at Hotel Forty-Five sponsored by Visit Macon, experienced Pin Strikes, and the Ocmulgee Mounds.

KUROBE, JAPAN SISTER CITY

High School students from Kurobe, Japan enjoyed time in Macon for the Cherry Blossom Festival, when they performed at Carolyn Crayton Park. Visit Macon worked with Macon-Bibb to provide a unique experience for these students, many of whom had never traveled to the U.S.



VISITOR SERVICES

The Visitor Center enhancements continues to move forward with significant improvements, including the installation of an **ADA-friendly checkout and information desk** and an updated **Ocmulgee Mounds display**. Both projects incorporated reclaimed wood to emphasize our ongoing commitment to sustainability and recycling.

The Visitor Center also remains dedicated to advancing diversity, equity, accessibility, and neurodiversity inclusion. Annual participation in **VisitAble's Disability Inclusion Training** reinforces our pledge to create an environment where every visitor feels welcomed, respected, and valued.

MOBILE TEAM

11,972 INTERACTIONS
AT EVENTS

Our Mobile Tourism Team continues to be a driving force in engagement through participation in community events and a strategic regional push to attract visitors. In FY25, the team interacted with 11,972 individuals at events throughout the Southeast—sharing Macon's story and generating enthusiasm for future visits.

We achieved this through:

- Per quarter, attending one national event with large attendance numbers and two statewide events
- Weekly participation in community markets, festivals, and attraction-based events in surrounding areas

Partnerships with local and regional organizations helped strengthen Macon's visibility. Collaborations included the **Black Expo**, **Americanafest**, **Atlanta Food & Wine Festival**, and the **Governor's Conference on Tourism**, among others. These efforts enhanced Macon's profile and deepened community connections across the region.

TOURS & EXPERIENCES

We successfully rebranded our van, walking, and specialty tours under **Rock Candy Tours**, resulting in substantial growth:

This success stemmed from:

- Adding new walking and specialty tour options
- Promotion through the Mobile Tourism Team
- Advertising custom group tours and positioning the Visitor Center as an attraction
- Attending major industry events such as Travel South, National Tour Association, American Bus Association, Georgia CVB, and Destination International's IPW Conference
- Hosting and escorting FAM tours for guests of honor, media, and industry professionals

RETAIL

FY25 was a record year for retail, surpassing our \$25,000 goal and ending at \$44,300.14, a **15% increase** from FY24. To continue this growth, we plan to:

- Introduce seasonal merchandise
- Expand retail opps through our Mobile Team
- Participate in local markets and festivals
- Encourage local corporate partners to purchase Macon-branded merchandise

RETAIL SALES
\$44K+

256



FY25 BOOKINGS

INCREASE

FROM 150 FY24



52

MOTORCOACH & PRIVATE TOURS

INCREASE

FROM 28 IN FY24



At the heart of all we do, our goal remains simple—to connect visitors and locals with the best of Macon. Destination Specialists continually update information on attractions, restaurants, shopping, and accommodations, ensuring every visitor experiences the warmth, history, and creativity that define our city —

Where Soul Lives



VISIT MACON

Board of Directors

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Justin Andrews, **Chair**
Emily Hopkins, **Vice Chair**
Tina Dickson, **Treasurer**
Patty Gibbs, **Past Chair**

HOTELIERS:

Kathy Martin, Macon Marriott City Center
Preeti Singh, La Quinta by Wyndham

ATTRACTIONS:

Emily Hopkins, NewTown Macon / MainStreet
Justin Andrews, Otis Redding Foundation
Richard Brent, The Big House
Lisa Lemon, Ocmulgee Mounds Association

TOURISM ENTITY (INCLUDING RESTAURANTS, RETAIL, ETC):

Tina Dickson, Ingleside Village Pizza

MACON-BIBB CO. REP:

Mayor Pro Tem Seth Clark

COMMUNITY LEADERS:

Patty Gibbs, Ronald McDonald House
David Thompson, Piedmont Construction

EX-OFFICIO/ NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

David Aiello, Oak View Group
Gary Wheat, Visit Macon President & CEO
Renita Patterson, Greater Macon Chamber
Stacy Moore, Cherry Blossom Festival
Ryan Logan, Director of Marketing & Tourism
at Muscogee (Creek) Nation