

Northern Brunswick County

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS PLAN



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NCGrowth & SmartUp

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INTRODUCTION

This project was born of unlikely circumstances when a resident of Brunswick County happened upon a member of the NCGrowth & SmartUp team, and a partnership was made. The goal of this partnership is to spark an economic boom in Northern Brunswick County by supporting the development of several tourism projects.



The first component of the tourism project involves **reinvigorating the North Carolina Rice Festival to annually attract multiple visitors to the area.** The second component entails **the development of the Cedar Hill African American Heritage Park** which will include the restored Reaves Chapel Church and museum, the nearby Cedar Hill Cemetery, a restored Rosenwald School, and a trail network that connects the different historic sites. Strategies for planning and implementing the North Carolina Rice Festival will be the primary focus of this business and marketing plan, but suggestions and approaches for other ongoing tourism components in Northern Brunswick County are also included.

Background and Context

Brunswick County has an estimated population of 136,744 according to the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. The county is currently experiencing tremendous population growth. From 2010 to 2019, there has been a 27.3% population increase—likely due in part to the northern part of the county serving as a bedroom community for Wilmington. North Brunswick County is only a few short minutes' drive away from Wilmington with more affordable housing cost with a \$903 median gross rent.

The racial and ethnic makeup of the county is 82.1% White alone, 10.3% Black, 0.8% American Indian, 0.8% Asian alone, and 4.9% Latinx, according to the most recent ACS data. The ACS also reveals that the county has an estimated 13,572 veterans, is 79% owner occupied in terms of housing. The families who live in those homes have a diverse set of circumstances. The ACS data shows that an estimated 5.2% of households speak a language other than English at home, 91% households have a computer, and 81% households have broadband internet.

Education in the county has pros and cons. There is an estimated 90.4% high school graduation rate, which is on par with the state and the country. However, only 28.6% of people age 25 or older hold a bachelor's degree or higher according to (2014-2018) ACS five-year estimates. Additionally, only 50% of residents are participants in the civilian labor force.

Founded in 1764, Brunswick County borders the Atlantic Coast, and is the southernmost county in North Carolina. Brunswick was named for King George I, the Duke of Brunswick and Lunenburg. Brunswick County's fishing industry has been central to the county's economy, in addition to agriculture and manufacturing. During the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s, Brunswick County was also the North Carolina State leader in rice production, which is why the NC Rice Festival was based here. In addition to rice, farmers in the area have grown corn, berries, tobacco, cotton, and raised various types of livestock.

The beaches in the southeast part of the county attract tourists and vacationers from across North Carolina and the United States. Sunset Beach, Oak Island, Holden Beach, Bald Head Island, and Ocean Isle Beach are some of the most popular tourist destinations. Now it is time to highlight tourism in the Northern part of the county.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is defined as responsible tourism to natural sites for the purpose of natural, cultural, or community preservation. Some even say that ecotourism is about traveling to places where "flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the main attractions" (Centre for Ecotourism, n.d.). Well, cultural heritage is rich in Brunswick County. The county was home to the Gullah Geechee people, Rosenwald schools, and a number of influential historic figures.

➤ One of the most important components of ecotourism is that it is both beneficial to the economy and to the community. In Brunswick County, the goal is to develop a greenway with a network of trails that connect a number of historical sites. The historical sites include an **African American cemetery and the historic Reaves Chapel American Methodist Episcopal Church** which is currently being restored.



Historic Reaves Chapel Church, Navassa, NC

➤ In addition, the **Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor** is a 12,000 square mile tract of land designated by the U.S. Congress to commemorate the history of the Gullah Geechee people. The corridor spans portions of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. The trail presently includes notable sites such as: McLeod Plantation, the Caw Caw Interpretive Center, the Gullah Museum of Georgetown, and more. In NC, the GGHC runs from Pender County to St. John's County. Soon, additional sites to see will operate in Northern Brunswick County, NC. In 2006, the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation awarded \$25,000 to support the Gullah Geechee Heritage Trail and to sponsor local festivals. These local festivals have been an instrumental tool to provide educational,

cultural, and community building experiences as well as to support economic development. **The North Carolina Rice Festival will be one such event.**

Gullah Geechee Heritage

The Gullah Geechee people are Black Americans who are descendants of Central and West African enslaved peoples who were traditionally enslaved in isolated areas along the Atlantic Coast. According to the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission (2020), this isolation enabled them to retain African traditions related to food, crafts, music, and even language. Gullah, a Creole language, was created from a blend of African and European



Photo Source: WECT6 News

Community Day at Historic Reaves Chapel (2019)

languages and is normally spoken in coastal regions of Georgia and South Carolina. Additionally, the peoples in Georgia go by the shortened name “Geechees.” The Gullah diet was rich in locally grown fruits, vegetables, meat, and seafood. During the slave trade, okra, rice, yams, peas, peppers, peanuts, watermelon, and sorghum were imported from Africa. In addition, enslaved peoples were brought to this region of North Carolina specifically for their knowledge of

how to grow rice. These people engineered and transformed swampland into rice fields and cultivated rice on what would become large rice plantations. As a result, rice ultimately became one of the most profitable exports of this region as a result (Thorpe, 2020).

The northernmost section of the federally designated Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor includes Brunswick, New Hanover, and Pender counties. In Northern Brunswick County, there is a sizeable community of Geechee people; in fact, Navassa is made up predominantly of Gullah decedents. In the Leland and Navassa areas, the Geechee people had a strong sense of community. They practiced religion together at churches like Reaves Chapel, sent their children to Rosenwald schools of which there were several in the area, and they buried their ancestors together at African American cemeteries. Due to the rich Geechee history in this area, **it is a prime location for ecotourism.**

Gullah Geechee Heritage: Tourism Needs

The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission created focus groups **to develop strategies for Gullah Geechee tourism for economic development.** Below is the summary of one such focus group which identified current



tourism needs and approaches.

Focus Group Participants:

Although identities were confidential outside of the focus group, generally speaking, there were a range of participants: those working in Gullah Geechee tourism sites (e.g. historic sites, museums, etc.) across the corridor from NC to FL, experts in Gullah-Geechee heritage research, and individuals from Gullah-Geechee communities.

Summary of Focus Group Questions and Responses:

Question:	Responses:
<p>In terms of your experiences with Gullah Geechee heritage tourism past and present, what has worked, what has not worked, and what needs to be done?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of true, authentic stories across historic sites • Knowledgeable community elders are passing on, and young people in the communities don't necessarily care about preserving culture • Need more stories from actual members of Gullah Geechee communities to share authentic memories of the culture
<p>Reflect on the needs of the Gullah Geechee people and communities for taking advantage of tourism opportunities, specifically opinions on heritage tourism as a tool for economic development: What types of businesses could be developed and how? What are other needs with regard to tourism business development?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect more oral histories and stories from elders, which could lead to book tours, etc. • Explore the value of library partnerships • Create a central Gullah Geechee museum or center to share heritage • Emphasize Gullah Geechee food and beverage—potentially through venues such as Airbnb experiences or food trucks

Overall, the future Cedar Hill African American Heritage Park and North Carolina Rice Festival will both offer ways to address current tourism needs, tying well with the goals of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission.

NORTHERN BRUNSWICK COUNTY ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS

As mentioned, there are two major components to tourism efforts in Northern Brunswick County that will contribute to ongoing economic development in the area. These include:

- 1. The Cedar Hill African American Heritage Park which will be composed of multiple sites:**
 - The restored Reaves Chapel Church and Museum
 - The Phoenix Colored School (a historic Rosenwald School)
 - The Cedar Hill Cemetery
 - The Gullah Geechee Heritage Trail
- 2. The North Carolina Rice Festival** to be held annually in March; will focus on Navassa's rich Gullah Geechee heritage

The following sections provide context for each proposed component of the Cedar Hill African American Heritage Park, as well as a description of the North Carolina Rice Festival.

1.

Cedar Hill African American Heritage Park

Historic Reaves Chapel Church and Museum

One of the partners on this project, the Cedar Hill/West Bank Heritage Foundation (CHWBHF) (a non-profit founded in 2013) which is located in the town of Navassa, has been central in restoring one of the sites which will be integral to the Brunswick County economic development tourism project. That site is the aforementioned Reaves Chapel. Estimated to be between 120 and 150 years old, Reaves Chapel has been a key part of the community for over one hundred years (CHWBHF, 2019). Built by former slaves of the Cedar Hill Plantation after the civil war, the church was home to former slaves and farmers of neighboring rice plantations (CHWBHF, 2019). It is no surprise that this church was such an important pillar in the community. Gullah people and other enslaved Africans had much exposure to Christian religious practices. The Gullah people in particular extracted aspects of Christianity which were salient to them and wove those things into their African belief system.

Originally the church was along the riverfront, but in 1909, it was relocated to Cedar Hill Road on land donated by Edward Reaves, for whom the church is named. From 1909 to 1995, the church served as the venue for concerts, community events, and bible studies.

Unfortunately, in 1995, the matriarch of the church died, and the congregation dwindled out of existence. The church began to decay until it became an unviable space. Now, the Coastal Land Trust and the Land Management Group have been working with the CHWBHF to stabilize and restore the church. The hope is that at the completion of the restoration project, the State of North Carolina will take over ownership and **transform Reaves Chapel into a museum for visitors from all over the South to come and learn about the history of the Gullah Geechee people.**



Phoenix Colored School: A Historic Rosenwald School

In Brunswick County, there used to be eight Rosenwald Schools all located in predominately Black communities. North Carolina had more Rosenwald schools than any other state and three of those schools were present in Navassa! Rosenwald Schools were named for Julius Rosenwald, who was the president of Sears-Roebuck. He was born August 12, 1862 in Springfield, Illinois. During his career, he gained a wealth of experience in clothing manufacturing and business. In 1924, Rosenwald left Sears, Roebuck, and Co. in order to devote his time to his philanthropies. Rosenwald's religion played a large part in what he viewed as right which was largely cultivated by his Rabbi.

The history of the Rosenwald Schools begins with Booker T. Washington, the Principal of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. Rosenwald met Washington in Chicago and was invited to become a trustee of Tuskegee Institute. He and Washington soon became good friends. In 1912, \$25,000 was given directly to the Tuskegee Institute. Washington wanted "...to use \$2,100 of this amount in an experiment in building six rural schools for Black students." Rosenwald agreed on one condition: that the money be a challenge grant. He would provide the money if the community in which the school was to be located would raise funds or pledge work and materials for the school. By 1915, he had given eighty challenge grants for schools in a three-state area. However, concerns were raised about the quality of the schools. Each school was recommended to have two acres of land so there could be a plot for agricultural demonstrations and school gardens. Further, Rosenwald schools taught vocational skills and provided training in agricultural and mechanical trades, a feature which was ideal in Northern Brunswick County, given the agricultural underpinnings of the community.

In each community that housed a Rosenwald school, the state and county education officials had to agree to accept the school into the public-school system. The design of the schools has historical significance because each school was given floor plans and specifications for a variety of schools, using the most up-to-

date innovations in school design. The blueprints of the floor plans were released in a series of pamphlets entitled Community School Plans. The pamphlets included general specifications and directions for community school buildings – from the best excavation process to the type of wood to be used for doors down to how far from the ground the windows were to be hung.

There were three Rosenwald Schools in what is present-day Navassa. The Phoenix Colored School was located about two miles from Reaves Chapel Church. It was a center of community activity before its demise in the mid-1960s. **That school is to be recreated as part of the Cedar Hill African American Heritage Park and will house a Rosenwald School Museum.**

Cedar Hill Cemetery

Last used around 1960, this cemetery was originally located near the Prospect/Cedar Hill Plantation. It is now located near Reaves Chapel Church, and served as the burial ground for slaves and their descendants.

Gullah Geechee Heritage Trail

A proposed greenway with a network of trails that will connect a number of historic sites in the area, including the Reaves Chapel and Museum, the Phoenix Colored School, and the Cedar Hill Cemetery.

2.

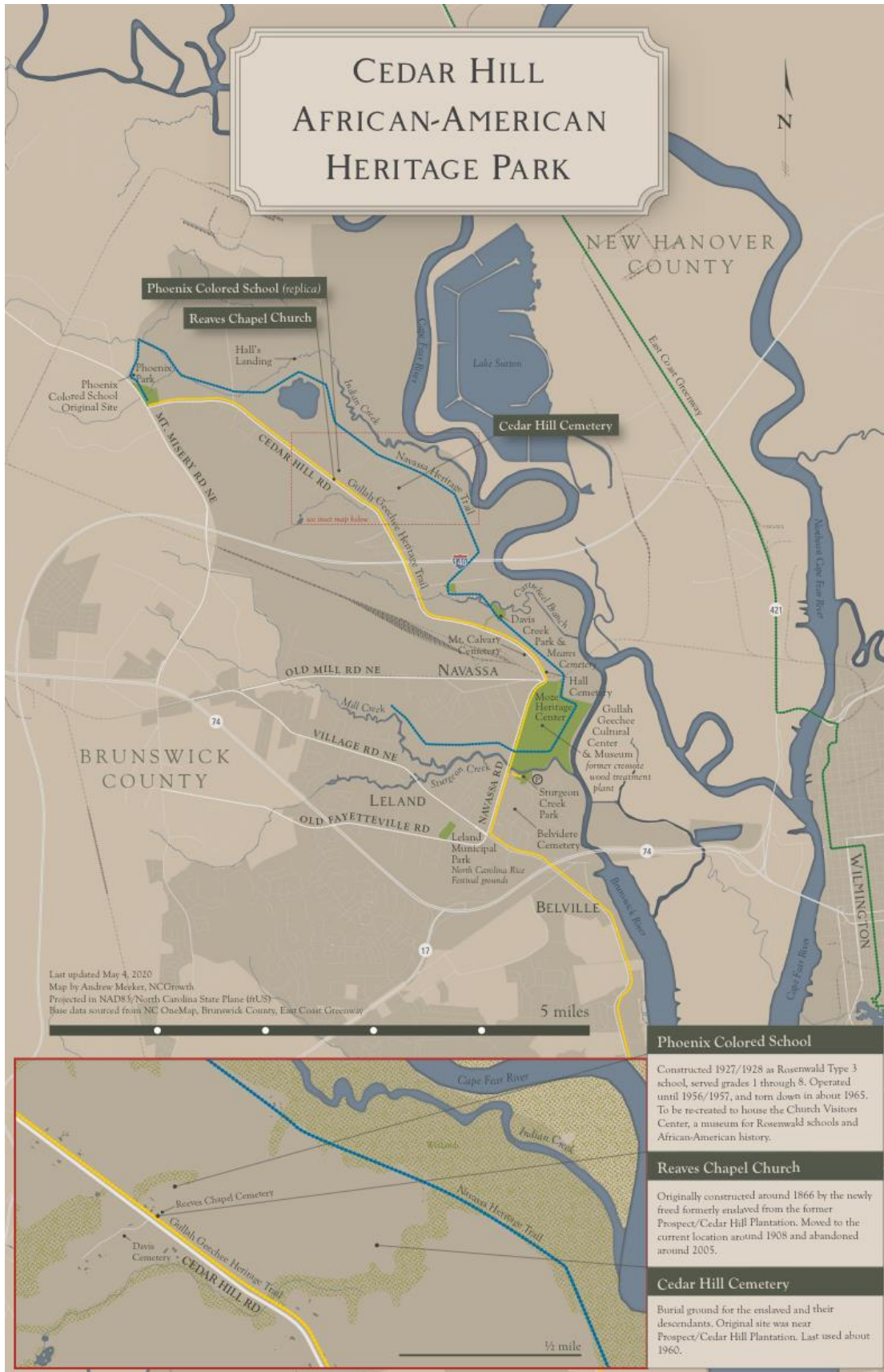
The North Carolina Rice Festival

As noted, one of the goals of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission is to produce special events and festivals to educate people about the Gullah Geechee culture. One of those events is the North Carolina Rice Festival. The North Carolina Rice Festival was founded in 2014 by W.C. Lanier. The festival, which was originally located in Belville, NC, was purchased by the Leland Tourism Development Authority in 2017. However, unfortunately due to natural disasters, the festival has not taken place since the rights were purchased. The festival will resume in 2021 or 2022 by a new non-profit, the North Carolina Rice Festival, Inc.

The vision of the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Rice Festival, Inc. is to create an annual, self-sustaining event that can educate and entertain approximately 2,500 festival attendees while exposing them to the unique rice-growing culture of Brunswick County and its surrounding locales.



MAP OF KEY ASSETS: EXISTING AND PLANNED



NORTH CAROLINA RICE FESTIVAL TOURISM CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

The Rice Festival

The intention is for the North Carolina Rice Festival to be a cornerstone for economic development in Northern Brunswick County. Hopefully, the festival with its thousands of visitors each year will draw many tourists to the area. However, with the expected bump in tourism traffic, it is vital to assess the current tourism capacity of the area.

Assessment of Current Tourism Capacity in Northern Brunswick County

According to tourism data, 89% of coastal out-of-town tourists come to the area for pleasure and they stay an average of 4.5 nights. 33% of said tourists will stay in hotels and 5% will stay in nonconventional accommodations such as AirBnb or VRBO. According to a 2019 AirBnb report, from June 2018-June 2019, North Carolina's 80 rural counties earned \$76 million dollars of supplemental income from 436,000 guests. The supplemental income gained in these counties is the result of a 74% growth rate of year-over-year growth, which tremendously outpaces suburban and urban counties in the state. This short-term rental market thus represents massive economic development and tourism capacity building potential.

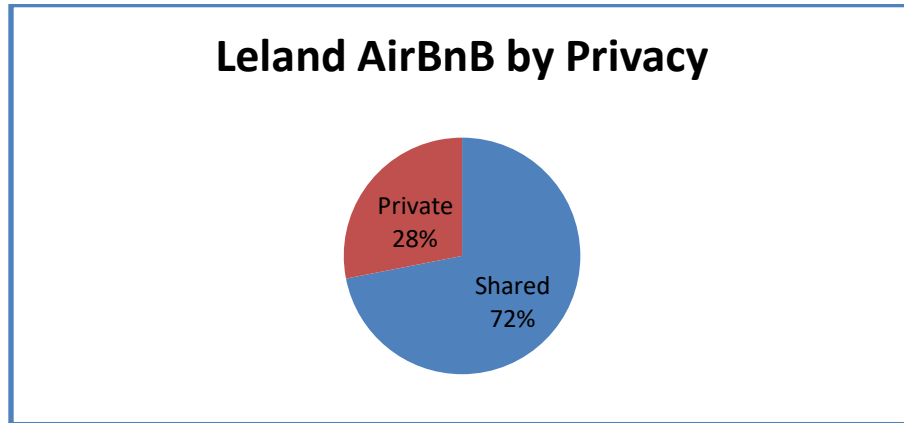


The report also indicates that the majority of traditional hotel stays exist in metropolitan areas, so there is a unique opportunity to accommodate overnight tourists in rural counties like Brunswick County. While the number of AirBnbs and other homestays in Northern Brunswick County is low, it is still far higher than that of traditional hotels in the area. Below is a breakdown of the hotels and nonconventional accommodations available in Northern Brunswick County. Unfortunately, there are few of these options available and this may cause tourists to elect to stay in Wilmington which is only a few miles away and is situation in urban New Hanover County. Tourists may also elect to stay in Southern Brunswick County since it is just a short drive away and has many more options available. Therefore, it is important to encourage homeowners in the northern part of the county to consider tapping into the homestay market.

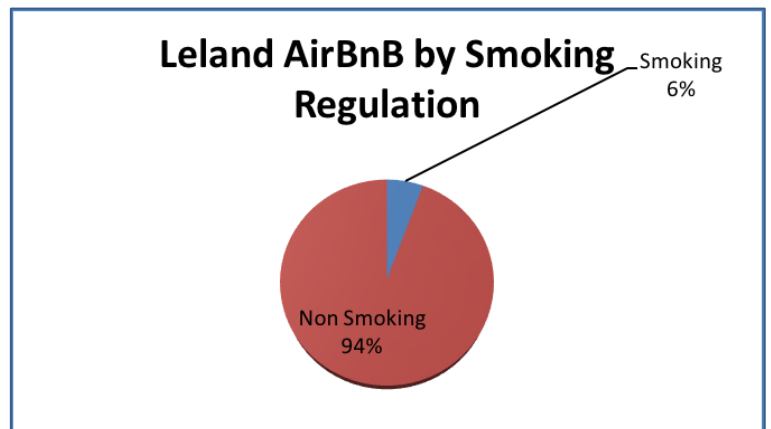
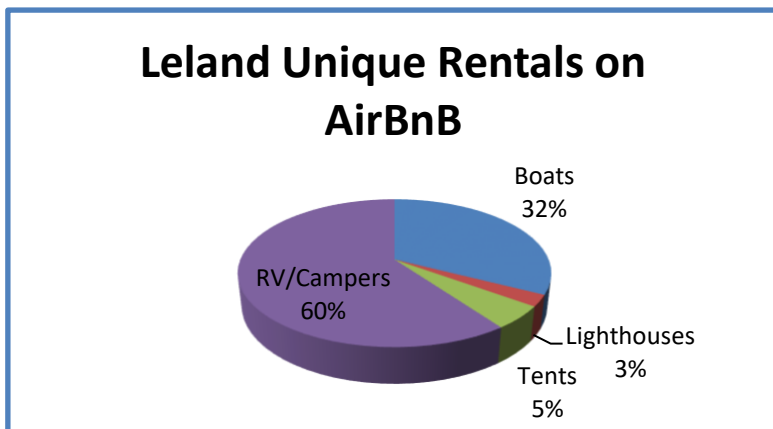
Hotel Accommodations

1. Holiday Inn Express Leland – Wilmington Area 1020 Grandiflora Drive Leland, NC
2. Holiday Inn Express & Suites Southport Oak Island Area 3400 Southport Supply Road, Bolivia, North Carolina 28422
 - a. Rates starting at \$113/night
 - b. 4.6/5 stars
 - c. Complimentary breakfast
 - d. Conference room available for rent
3. Best Western Plus Westgate Inn & Suites 1120 Town Lake Drive Leland, NC
 - a. 4 stars on Trip Advisor

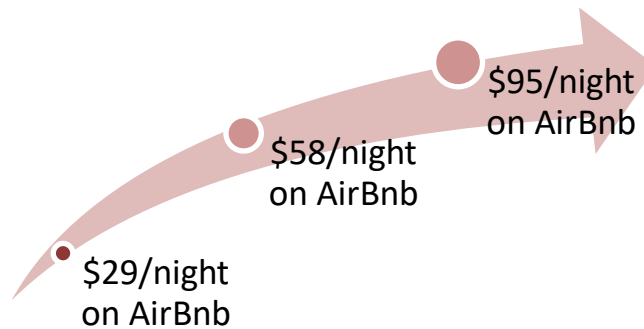
- b. They have Wi-Fi, complimentary breakfast, and an outdoor pool.
 - c. The hotel has options to reserve event space for weddings, parties, receptions, and business meetings or small conferences. The conference room has a 40-person occupancy and is available to rent for \$100 for two hours, and \$25 for each additional hour. Catering is available for an additional charge.
 - d. This hotel is in close proximity to downtown Wilmington which has a variety of entertainment options.
4. Upcoming hotel—Leland Town Center
- a. This hotel is not yet open, but is coming soon and will add to the area’s capacity to hold overnight tourists.



Bedrooms	Guests Available	Nightly Price	Square Footage	Vendor
3	6	\$70	1,500	VRBO
2	4	\$163	1,290	VRBO
2	4	\$154	1,190	VRBO
1	5	\$84	N/A	VRBO

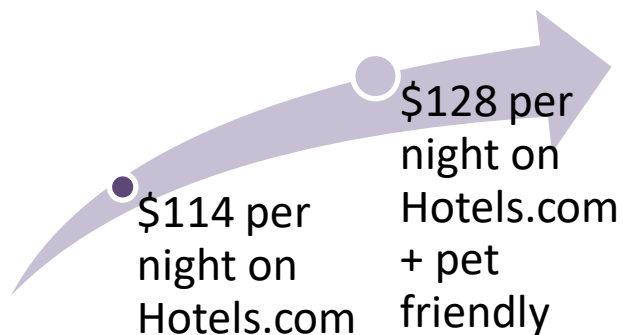


Price Diagram for AirBnb Rentals

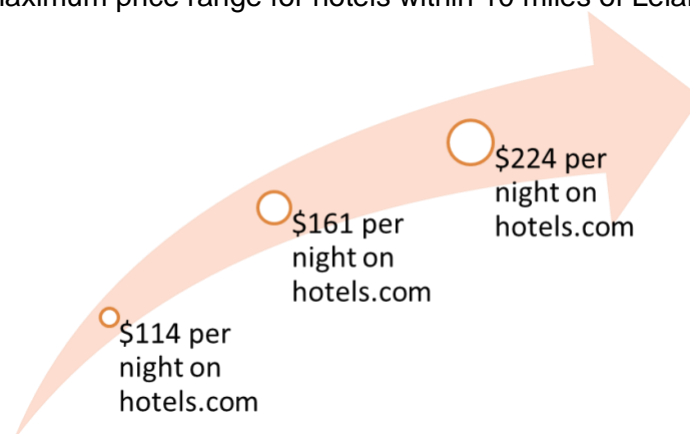


Price diagram for Hotels

Minimum and maximum price range for hotels within 5 miles of Leland City Center (2 total)



Minimum, median, and maximum price range for hotels within 10 miles of Leland city center (7 total)



As shown by the above pricing diagrams, hotels and AirBnbs in Northern Brunswick County are quite competitively priced. However, they are very few. This represents an obstacle given that there are over 300 AirBnb stays in Wilmington, which is just a few short minutes away. Further, there are a number of hotels and resort stays in Southern Brunswick County, which is also just a

short drive away. Therefore, tourists to Northern Brunswick County may partake in activities in Northern Brunswick County but stay elsewhere. This is not good because those dollars would then be spent elsewhere. Therefore, it would be a good idea to encourage more residents in Northern Brunswick County to start AirBnbs as a source of secondary income. According to Barnes Sutton, the Planning Director for the Town of Navassa, there are no restrictions on AirBnbs in the town. Therefore, there would be few barriers to starting this revenue stream.

In Brunswick County overall, from June 1, 2018 to June 1, 2019, AirBnb hosts made \$6 million across 37,000 guests. These numbers represent an 86% growth rate from the previous year. However, there is no data to indicate how much of the income/growth was in the southern part of the county vs. the northern part. Future work may include working with AirBnb’s Office of Healthy Tourism to parse out that data and make a plan for the growth of short-term stays in Northern Brunswick County.

Data from Visit North Carolina, a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, shows that out-of-town visitors to the coastal region will spend an average of \$1,240 for overnight trips and \$219 for day trips. That money can go straight into the economy of Northern Brunswick County if there are viable options for visitors to spend their tourist dollars. For those who come in from out of town to visit for the North Carolina Rice Festival. There will be a number of other recreational opportunities to partake in during the trip, and there must be given that the festival will only be 2 days and the average visitor will stay 4.5 nights. Below is some information about where tourists can spend money while they are in town. It should be noted that during their trip, 15-20% of visitors will partake in fine dining (trending up), 17-18% will visit churches or historic sites (trending down), 10-16% will visit museums (trending down), 1-3% will visit spas and health clubs (trending up), and 1.5-2.5% will visit special events and festivals.

Day Trip Expenditure	Overnight Trip Expenditure	Average Stay	Share of People Visiting Fine Dining	Share of People Visiting Churches/Historic Sites	Share of People Visiting Museums	Share of People Visiting Spas	Share of People Visiting Fests
\$219	\$1,240	4.5 Nights	15-20%	17-18%	10-16%	1-3%	1.5-2.5%

Given the amount of disposable dollars that incoming tourists will be prepared to spend, it only makes sense to analyze where tourists may spend that money. Below is a list of entertainment options for tourists to explore for the weekend beyond the North Carolina Rice Festival.

Entertainment

1. 34N Experiment Station by Red Hare Brewing Company in Shallotte, NC
 - a. In addition to being open for patrons on a daily basis for beer on tap, soda, and tap room tours, private events for up to 90 people can be hosted here and includes a private brewery tour. Children and dogs are welcome. In the southeast portion of Brunswick County.

2. Bridge Water Wines Leland, NC
3. Wine & Design Leland, NC
4. Leland Cultural Arts Center Leland, NC

Museums

1. Southport Maritime Museum NC Maritime Museum at Southport
2. The Bald Head Island Conservatory
3. Brunswick County Historical Society

Spas, Wellness, and Salons

1. SpiritQuest
2. Sacred Willow Spa
3. Oceans Massage and Skin Care
4. Gentle Nails Leland, NC
5. Regal Nails Salon and Spa Leland, NC
6. Hollywood Nails Tanning and Spa Leland, NC
7. Beverly Nails Leland, NC
8. Tiffany Nail Leland, NC
9. Color Street Leland, NC



Outdoor Recreation

1. Existing Outdoor Recreation Sites

- a. Reel em N Charters Leland, NC
- b. Navassa Township District Park (5 acres)
 - i. Playground
 - ii. Softball field
 - iii. Basketball court
 - iv. Tennis court
 - v. Picnic shelters and grilling area
- c. Town Hall Park Navassa, NC
- d. Phoenix Park Navassa, NC
- e. Davis Creek Park Navassa, NC
 - i. Walkways
 - ii. Piers
 - iii. Boat and kayak launching area
 - iv. The Town of Navassa has two kayaks available for public rental
- f. Magnolia Green Golf Plantation Leland, NC
 - i. 27 holes of golf
 - ii. Blossoms Restaurant at Magnolia
 - iii. Pickle ball courts
- g. House of Pickle Ball Leland, NC
- h. Compass Pointe Golf Club Leland, NC
 - i. 7,228 yards
 - ii. Latitudes Restaurant
 - iii. Special Events
- i. Cape Fear National Golf Course at Brunswick Forest Leland, NC
 - i. 18 holes
 - ii. Pickle ball courts
- j. Pickle ball courts at Waterford of the Carolinas
- k. Cypress Cove Park (formerly Sturgeon Creek) (27 acres) Leland, NC

- i. Canoe/Kayak launch
 - ii. Fishing
 - iii. Outdoor classroom
 - iv. Walking space
- I. Founders Park (8 acres) Leland, NC
 - i. Temporary 9-hole Disc Golf Course
 - ii. Leland Community Garden (plots can be rented for a small fee)
 - iii. Walking space
 - iv. 0.6 mile multi-use path
- m. Westgate Nature Park (150 acres) Leland, NC
 - i. 0.3 mile pave trail for walking or biking
 - ii. Picnic area
 - iii. Playground
- n. Ev-Henwood Nature Preserve Leland, NC
 - i. 15 trails
 - ii. 7 miles of native plants and animals
- o. Shelton Herb Farm Leland, NC
- p. Wonderland Farm Leland, NC
 - i. Horse riding
 - ii. Summer Camp
- q. Brunswick Nature Park Winnabow, NC
 - i. Mountain Biking
- r. Mahanaim Adventures Leland, NC
 - i. Kayaking, canoeing, and backpacking

2. Future Outdoor Recreation Sites, Not Yet Fully Developed

- a. Hall's Landing
- b. The Gullah Geechee Heritage Trail

3. Recreation Events

- a. Dink for Pink National Pickle Ball Tournament

Historic Sites

1. Existing Historic Sites

- a. The Bald Head Island Lighthouse ("Old Baldy")
- b. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site, Winnabow, NC

2. Future Historic Sites, Not Yet Full Developed

- a. Cedar Hill African American Park
- b. Reaves Chapel/Cedar Hill Cemetery

Restaurants

1. Hwy 55 Burgers, Shakes Leland , NC
2. The Fuzzy Peach Frozen Yogurt Bar Leland, NC
3. Shuckin' Shack Oyster Bar Leland, NC
4. McDonald's Leland, NC
5. Jimmy John's Leland, N
6. Clean Eatx Express Leland, NC
7. Papi's Chicken Leland, NC 28451
8. Tropical Smoothie Café Belville, NC 28451

9. Yummi Yummi Leland, NC
10. Shirley's Diner Leland, NC
11. Waffle House Leland, NC
12. Family Pizza and Subs Leland, NC
13. Brodee Dogs Leland, NC
14. Cape Fear Seafood Company Belville, NC
15. Jade Garden Leland, NC
16. M+ K's Kitchen Leland, NC
17. KFC Leland, NC
18. PT's Olde Fashioned Grill Leland, NC
19. Taco Bell Leland, NC
20. Bojangle's Famous Chicken and Biscuits Leland, NC
21. Starbucks Leland, NC
22. Jersey Mike's Leland, NC
23. Charlie Grainger's Leland, NC
24. Panera Bread Leland, NC
25. Islands Fresh Mex Grill Leland, NC
26. Future Restaurants, Not Yet Established
 - a. Leland Smokehouse Leland, NC
 - b. Wendy's Leland, NC
 - c. Firehouse Grill Leland, NC

Other

1. Navassa Community Center Navassa, NC
2. Climactic Entertainment Services/Wedding DJ Navassa, NC
3. Leland Cultural Arts Center Leland, NC
4. Atlantic Premier Entertainment

Pet Services

1. Magnolia's Bed & Biscuit – Luxury Boarding & Day Care Services for Dogs & Cats Leland, NC
2. Family Dog Naturals – Pet Store, Leland,
3. Leland Pet Resort Leland, NC

Retail

1. The Shoe Center Leland, NC
2. Sandalwood Shoppes Leland, NC
3. Kendall's Hallmark Shop Leland, NC
4. A Special Gift – Gift Shop Leland, NC
5. Your Variety Gift Store Leland, NC
6. Dollar Tree Leland, NC
7. Walgreens Leland, NC
8. Hope Chest Thrift Store Leland, NC
9. Belville ABC Leland, NC
10. Quilting-N-Crafts-N-Things Leland, NC
11. Custom Quilling Supplies Leland, NC
12. Katies Art & Frame Leland, NC
13. Sweet Nectar's Florist Leland, NC
14. Family Dollar, Leland, NC
15. Walmart Super Center Leland, NC

16. Dollar General Leland, NC

Services for Businesses

1. Murray Signs and Graphics Leland, NC
 - a. Services include: exterior signs, vehicle graphics, indoor signs, directional signs, custom decals, banners, photos to canvas, and large format copies and prints.
 - b. This could be a useful local business to create the signage for the North Carolina Rice Festival.

Business Opportunities

We have not been able to find any Gullah-owned restaurants in the northern part of the county. Given that Gullah is a central part of this tourism development plan and that fine dining was the leading tourism attraction for coastal NC tourists, there may be a unique opportunity for an entrepreneur to start a fine dining Gullah restaurant. An option could be for an up and coming chef to pilot their food at the North Carolina Rice Festival, or start out with a food truck and then leverage that into a brick and mortar restaurant later. According to Barnes Sutton, Planning Director for the Town of Navassa, it is fairly easy to get permission to start a food truck in the town. There are no ordinances in Navassa restricting food trucks and there is just a quick online form to get permitted.

NORTH CAROLINA RICE FESTIVAL

CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

Festival Case Studies Summary:

In this section, we review existing festivals that are similar in scope or focus to the North Carolina Rice Festival and provide case studies for each: the Ocean City Jazz Festival (Ocean City, NC), the Zora! Festival of the Arts and Humanities (Eatonville, FL), and the Colleton County Rice Festival (Walterboro, SC). We also offer lessons learned in categories such as festival funding, marketing, implementation, and both cultural heritage and local community outreach. Below is a brief summary of these takeaways:



Photo Source: Ocean City Jazz Festival

Lessons Learned:

Funding:

- Offer a mixture of free and ticketed events; charge for events such as an exclusive kick-off party the night before the festival, VIP access to the festival, etc. and offer events such as live music or educational activities for free
- 2/3 festival organizers emphasized the value of event vendors in terms of revenue. Recruit a variety of vendors and charge a flat fee for participation
- Organize sponsors for both entire festival and specific events (e.g. “Parade” or “Gullah Geechee Cook-Off”); emphasize that other donations (e.g. water bottles, sandwiches, etc.) are also welcome in addition to monetary support

Marketing:

- Diversify marketing platforms: use television, radio, website, and social media
- Leverage both local (Wilmington) and regional (Raleigh-Durham and Charlotte, NC, Charleston, SC, Tidewater area in VA, etc.) channels
- Maintain consistent branding (colors, logo, etc.) across social media platforms

Implementation:

- Organize labor force around volunteers
- Offer shuttles for parking and on-site food and beverage to keep visitors on-site
- Create survey for incoming visitors to further pinpoint target audience and market accordingly the following year
- Host other events throughout the year (such as Memorial or Labor events, educational lectures, culturally based conferences, etc.) to encourage visitors to come back (e.g. Navassa Homecoming: features parade, ongoing committee, 5K, antique car culture, etc.)

Cultural Heritage and Community Outreach:

- Promote both local food vendors and create events around cultural food to both emphasize community involvement and cultural heritage
- Add specific cultural heritage events (such as a historic walking tour of historic sites in the community or a cultural food cook-off) to further the focus upon Gullah-Geechee heritage
- Partner with local schools or libraries to engage local audiences (e.g. students and their parents); for example, offer programming such as workshops or educational lectures that focus on heritage and cultural connections

Case Study #1: Ocean City Jazz Festival

Table 1: Ocean City Jazz Festival Snapshot

Location	Ocean City, NC
Dates Held	Annually every 4 th of July weekend
Year Founded	2009
Website	https://www.oceancityjazzfest.com/
Contact	Carla & Craig Torrey, info@oceancitync.com

Background

Every summer, the Ocean City Jazz Festival is a two-day event which features local and nationally recognized jazz musicians in the historic Ocean City Community. Fifteen years before the Civil Rights Act, this community was founded in 1949, the only place in North Carolina where African Americans could purchase coastal property. The festival is organized by the Ocean City Beach Citizens Council, a 501 c3, non-profit corporation. The goal: “promote and preserve the history and culture of the Ocean City Community in North Topsail Beach, North Carolina” and to “support tourism through financial support of the diversity that Jazz inspires and prevent the destruction of this historical site.”



Festival Events, Visitors, & Funding

Events include jazz singer line-ups, a gospel brunch, a tour of the historic community, and more. Over the two-day event, organizers Carla and Craig Torrey estimate that around 500-600 visitors attend per night (this number can vary, however, depending on the number of seats rented).

Event Cost. The festival is ticketed; for the Kick-Off Party the day before the festival begins, the cost to buy a ticket online is \$20 per adult and \$5 per child. A Saturday or Sunday ONLY Adult Ticket is \$65 while a Child’s is \$15. The cost to attend both days (Saturday and Sunday) is \$120 per adult and \$20 per child. Ticket prices increase \$5 per ticket at the gate.

Visitors. The target demographic for this festival is middle-class, age 20+, jazz and cultural

heritage enthusiasts. Carla shares that there is usually a combination of daytime visitors and those who stay overnight. After conducting a survey of festival visitors, organizers found that, in North Carolina, visitors come from Raleigh-Durham, Greensboro, Highpoint, Charlotte, and Wilmington. Outside of North Carolina, visitors usually come from the Washington, DC area, Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Lodging. The festival continues to have a problem with lodging since the dates are during a peak holiday. In addition, since the beach rentals on the island are based on a Saturday to Saturday time slot, which doesn't work for attendees, most stay in hotels in the community. Other rentals (VRBO, Airbnb, etc.) are also available.

Sponsors. For event funding, they try to lean heavily on festival sponsorship because ticket sales can vary depending on the weather. Sponsors include:

- Come Hear, North Carolina
- Jacksonville-Onslow Council of the Arts
- North Carolina Coastal Federation
- First Citizens Bank
- 90.7 FM, WNCU Station in Durham, NC

Marketing

Television and Radio. While they tried television marketing out of the Greenville, SC television station last year, they received better results with television ads from the Wilmington, NC station (the analysts at the tv station recommended airing ads within thirty days of the event). To attract visitors from the Raleigh-Durham area, they have promoted the festival via the jazz radio station, 90.7 FM, WNCU (also a festival sponsor). For the radio station broadcasts, organizers have usually begun promoting in February to get on visitor calendars.

Festival Website and Social Media. The Ocean City Jazz Festival website promotes the event each year through attractive visuals, clear structure for visitors to follow, and a strong emphasis upon cultural heritage celebration as the foundation of the event. The site makes effective use of top line which offers updated information each year about event line-ups or any announcements. The concise tag line clearly indicates the mission of the festival: "Jazz with a Higher Purpose." In addition, in terms of social media presence, organizers create Facebook events for individual festival events (e.g. live music, specific singers, etc.) which offers additional exposure each time social media users indicate interest in attending these events. There is also well-linked, consistent branding across the website and social media platforms (e.g. same colors, logos, etc.).

Other Venues. In addition to creating additional festival exposure through promoting events via different community websites, Carla shares that word-of-mouth advertising has been one of the best ways to market the event.

Community, History, and Education

Every year, there is an event program at the festival to focus on the history of Ocean City. For 2020, a walking tour of the neighborhood was planned along with a tent that people could go

through and learn more about the community's history. In addition to preserving cultural heritage through such events, as Carla notes, they "really want visitors to buy into the idea of the Ocean City Community and to continue supporting over time." Organizers have also made several attempts to add school programming, and hope to eventually add music outreach in area schools to introduce them to what jazz is, and generate further interest from the local community in the festival.

Land Use and Ownership. While the community is not against rental homes or development in the area, they have learned that, because of larger rental homes scattered throughout the neighborhood, they were unable to obtain a historic district listing for Ocean City. Carla says that they want to generate enough revenue from the festival and other sources at some point to purchase land or property in the community—those that are distressed properties, have a lack of family interest in purchasing, etc. They would buy the home and then that would belong to the community. They would subsequently be able to keep the cost of the home at a reasonable price for families who want to rent. The overall goal is to maintain the family-oriented focus of the community, and to keep the neighborhood looking as it did originally.

Lessons Learned

- Host other events throughout the year (such as Memorial or Labor events, etc.) to encourage overnight visitors to come back and support rentals in the community
 - Offer shuttles and on-site food and beverage. Although organizers originally had an issue with lack of parking, they later added a shuttle so that visitors wouldn't have to walk. They also recommend having food on site (food trucks, beer and wine, etc.), so people have everything they need at the festival without needing to leave.
 - Similar to the North Carolina Rice Festival, the focus of this event is upon preserving and celebrating cultural heritage. Adding specific events (such as a historic walking tour of historic sites in the community or a cultural food cook-off) can further the cultural heritage focus.
-

Case Study #2: Zora! Festival of the Arts and Humanities

Table 2: Zora! Festival Snapshot

Location	Eatonville, FL & other parts of Orange County
Dates Held	Annually over 9 days in late January/early February
Year Founded	1990
Website	https://zorafestival.org/
Contact	Dr. Tadayuki (Tad) Hara, Tadayuki.Hara@ucf.edu

Background

ZORA!™ Festival is a multi-day, multi-disciplinary, intergenerational event. The festival is composed of public talks, museum exhibitions, theatrical productions, arts education programming, and a three-day Outdoor Festival of the Arts over a nine-day period. According to the festival website, the event takes place primarily in Eatonville, Florida (around 10 miles north of Orlando) and throughout Orange County. Eatonville consists of about 2500 people, and is also known as the nation's oldest incorporated African American municipality.

Festival goals:

- To celebrate the life and work of Zora Neale Hurston
- To celebrate the historic significance of Eatonville
- To celebrate the cultural contributions which people of African ancestry have made to the United States and to world culture



Festival Events, Visitors, and Funding

Vice President of the festival's governing board, Dr. Tadayuki (Tad) Hara points out that, when free to the public, the Zora! Festival has attracted as many as 40,000 visitors in previous years. When they began to charge for festival attendance, the numbers moved down drastically to around a few thousand. Yearly attendance can also depend on weather. While some events such as public talks and theatrical productions take inside over the course of the festival, the big part is a three-day outdoor festival with vendors. Example events and activities from 2020 include:

Inaugural Africa – American Women’s Economic Forum:	Participants engage in a multi-cultural mix of women leaders exploring commerce and culture bridging Africa and America
Afrofuturism Conference:	2-day conference featuring distinguished scholars working in the field today utilizing the lens of the humanities
Education Day Programming:	Two free concurrent programs (Program 1: various educational activities offered at Outdoor Festival of the Arts and Program 2: 7th Annual ZORA! STEM Conference for Middle School Students: Orange County Library System provides students with STEM play-based learning opportunities)
3-Day Outdoor Festival of the Arts:	Includes live music, African Trade Expo, International Food Court, Fine Arts/Master Crafts Booths, etc.
Beyond Black Panther: Up Close & Personal Masquerade Party:	Signature Afro-Futurist event including dinner, music, Afrofuturistic Processional, special highlights and more

Event Cost. A full festival package purchased in advance online costs \$475 per adult; this includes all events and activities over the 9-day festival, as well as VIP access for the course of the Outdoor Festival of the Arts (i.e. catering, 2 adult beverages and up-front seating). This same package costs \$246 to purchase onsite, but only includes the Outdoor Festival of the Arts event and 2-day Afrotourism Conference as the Masquerade Party and Africa America Women’s Economic Forum can only be purchased online. Variations of this early bird package include a festival weekend package bought in advance online for \$379 which offers additional access to the Masquerade Party. Individual events tickets may also be purchased for varying prices:

Individual Tickets:

Events	
Inaugural Africa - America Women's Economic Forum	BUY TICKET NOW
Beyond Black Panther: Up Close & Personal Masquerade Party	BUY TICKET NOW
Afrofuturism Conference, (Two Day Ticket), Day 2, Featuring Ishmael Reed, Zora Neale Hurston Arts and Humanities Lecturer	BUY TICKET NOW
Afrofuturism Conference (One Day Ticket) Can be used to attend any one of the two days.	BUY TICKET NOW
Saturday, Outdoor Festival of the Arts in Eatonville; General Admission	BUY TICKET NOW
Saturday, Outdoor Festival of the Arts in Eatonville; V.I.P. Seating (includes food, 2 adult beverages and up-front seating)	BUY VIP TICKET
Sunday, Outdoor Festival of the Arts in Eatonville, General Admission	BUY TICKET NOW
Sunday, Outdoor Festival of the Arts in Eatonville, V.I.P. Seating (includes food, 2 adult beverages and up-front seating)	BUY VIP TICKET

Registration is free for the Afrofuturism Conference (both days) is free if you are:

- Faculty, Staff or Students at the University of Central Florida
- Faculty, Staff or Students at the Seminole State College of Florida
- Students Only at Bethune-Cookman University
- Students Only at Valencia College

For the festival, organizers also prepare temporary parking. They charge a parking fee (\$5-\$10), but have never made any significant cash flow from this. Free parking is offered a half-mile away with transport. However, this option has not been largely used in the past.

Visitors. Zora! receives public funding from the local government, and is then required to share how many visitors attended. They create a short survey for visitors to complete which usually asks for visitor zip code. One year, they collaborated with a DMO (Destination Marketing Organization) which organized an iPad survey. One of the first questions was “Where are you from?” Based on survey responses, the festival usually attracts visitors from nearby areas around Florida, Georgia, etc. as well as visitors from as far as New York.

Since cultural heritage activities generate people from outside of region, this then generates hotel tax. One year, 40,000 visitors attended the Zora! Festival. 20% of visitors from out of town stayed 2.1 nights. Thanks to the existence of festival, their presence generated enough hotel tax and revenue to justify annually receiving \$150,000 from the local government.

Lodging. Many visitors have the option to stay in nearby Orlando which is 6.4 miles from Eatonville. Next to Orange County, there are also areas with cheaper hotels. For example, in Kissimmee, FL located in neighboring Osceola County (27.8 miles from Eatonville), visitors may only pay around \$200 for a several-day stay. Tad notes that, five years ago, Kissimmee shared that less than 50% of hotel tax came from hotels; around 56% of hotel tax came from non-hotels (e.g. vacation homes, time-share, Airbnb rentals and other similar venues). Similarly, all rental units in Orange County are subject to hotel tax, including hotels, temporary stay, homestays for visitors, etc. Tad emphasizes that researching what classifies as hotel tax in the festival county is important to consider when promoting visitor lodging in addition to hotels (e.g. Airbnb).

Sponsors. Sponsors for Zora! may involve corporate sponsors or sometimes large individual dollars. For the Zora! Festival, sponsors include:

- Orange County Arts & Cultural Affairs Office
- The Florida Lottery
- University of Central Florida
- The World Conference of Mayors, Inc. (WCM)
- Culture Builds Florida
- Orange County Fire Rescue
- Seminole State College of Florida
- Project on the History of Black Writing
- Town of Eatonville, Florida

Tad points out that donations may not always come in the form of cash; for example, sponsors may donate dozens of water bottle cases for festival volunteers. Since festival volunteers need their lunch, for instance, this is where non-cash donations from sponsors become helpful. Organizers have then reached out to local restaurants in the past. These businesses may not be able to help on a large scale, but may be able to donate money or food for volunteers.

Other Funding. The main revenue cash flow is from food, crafts, and other vendors; while they do charge an entrance to general attendees, the revenue is not as large as that from vendors.

Marketing

On surveys in the past, organizers have asked a question about visitor race. Up to 83% identified as African American in past surveys, followed by a little over 10% of white visitors, and then other races. Gender was skewed in the survey results: more than 60% identified as female. Based on post-event analysis, organizers now market in various venues (e.g. social media, festival website, etc.) toward a very specific group based on existing data: African American and white women. Since Zora Neal Hurston was a very advanced icon for progressive women's liberation, Tad shares that the Zora! Festival has a very specific theme that attracts a particular type of visitor.

Tad also notes that there has been limited to mixed success for attracting visitors year-round. On a small scale, they have had visitors from NYC who attended the Zora! Festival in years past and then come back later on a charter bus to re-visit Eatonville. In addition, sometimes Eatonville has smaller, seasonal festivals that attract a few hundred people which may then return for the Zora! Festival.

Community, History, and Education

In order to generate interest among not only out-of-town visitors, but also the Eatonville community, organizers went to the local school board and asked to promote this heritage

tourism destination to their elementary, middle, and high school students. For example, they had an African American board member go to the school and deliver lectures. Tad points out that the best return of investment has been coordinating with school board.

Lessons Learned

- Offer advance purchasing of different event packages online that may include VIP access or exclusive access to certain events
- Create pre-festival events such as a kick-off party with cultural food or an educational lecture from a cultural heritage scholar in the humanities
- Research what hotel tax looks like for local area and whether options such as private, short-term rentals (e.g. Airbnb, VRBO, etc.) also generate hotel tax which can then generate revenue for the community
- Promote local food vendors with cultural dishes to both emphasize community involvement and cultural heritage
- Organize labor force around volunteers; look for individuals who share festival vision

Case Study #3: Colleton County Rice Festival

Table 3: Colleton County Rice Festival Snapshot

Location	Walterboro, SC
Dates Held	Annually in late April
Year Founded	1975
Website	http://ricefestival.org/
Contact	Colleton County Rice Festival, (843) 549-1079

Background

The Colleton County Rice Festival in Walterboro, South Carolina (48 miles from Charleston) is an annual event that features arts and crafts, food, fireworks, music and other entertainment. Since Colleton County was historically an ideal area for growing rice, the festival aims to celebrate its rice heritage and “the beauty of the people and land that continue to bless this great country.”

Festival Events, Visitors, and Funding

Family-friendly events include booths with handcrafted items, a special pageant to crown the “Queen of the Rice Festival,” a signature 5K run, fireworks, music, and other entertainment. Festival board member, Patrick Thomas, points out that variety is key. For example, while the festival takes place in late April, they offer a “Tour de Lowcountry” bike ride at the end of March which covers either a 62- or 31-mile ride. Riders pay \$30 in advance registration (payable to Colleton County Rice Festival) which includes a t-shirt, post-ride meal, and refreshments. Late/race day registration is \$35 with a t-shirt. What originally started as less than 50 riders has increased to 170 riders with individuals coming from as far as Ohio (2019 data). These riders often return each year.

To kick off the festival itself, organizers host a tasting event, “Taste of Walterboro,” with several restaurants and eateries offering samples from table to table; last year, there were about 20-25 places that had their food on display. Visitors pay a flat fee to access this event. In addition, in 2019, there were nearly 100 arts and crafts vendors who participated in the festival, as well as 15-20 food vendors.

Event Costs. Some events at the festival are free while others are ticketed. For example, a scheduled street performance in the community amphitheater is free of charge. Registration for the annual Rice Run (5K and 1 Mile Fun Run) ranges from \$10-\$30.

Visitors. Over the weekend-long event, the festival attracts between 20,000-25,000 visitors each April. Patrick notes that, in South Carolina, there is a huge festival culture; every weekend starting in the spring throughout the summer, there's a festival. This is the type of visitor that the Colleton County Rice Festival seems to attract: festival enthusiasts.

Lodging. Many visitors only come for the day as organizers tend to end the events by 9pm. For those who stay overnight, there are many bed and breakfasts in the area, as well as hotels in Walterboro. Patrick says that he is not sure about the market for short-term rentals in the area outside of the bed-and-breakfast offerings.

Sponsors. For funding for the Colleton County Rice Festival, major sponsors from the community and beyond include:

- Buck's Pizza
- Walmart
- Dominion Energy
- Colleton Museum and Farmer's Market
- Sunoco
- Walterboro Ford
- Other assorted local businesses



Festival organizers also organize sponsors for specific events. For example, the Festival Rice Run event is sponsored by Burger King, Cook Enterprises III, Inc., Colleton Medical Center, MAKO Medical, and Palmetto Rural Telephone Company.

Marketing

Television and Radio. The festival uses multiple venues to promote the event. For the 2020 festival (since rescheduled for later this year), organizers shot a commercial to air on a local channel; they also promote on a regional channel from Charleston which is seen as far as Georgetown, Myrtle Beach, Hilton Head, etc.

Festival Website and Social Media. The festival website is accessible with updated info about events. The festival also presents a strong social media presence in the months before the festival with intermittent posts, starting as early as January. Facebook events created for each event ("Fireworks," "Parade," etc.) keep the festival consistently in the periphery of viewers. Like the Ocean City Jazz Festival, there is consistent branding across platforms (color, logo, tone).

Other Venues. Organizers also sell a t-shirt in the county that features the Colleton County Rice Festival logo; t-shirts may be purchased in the local Bi-Lo, Walmart, etc. T-shirts are also sold to companies and vendors; for an additional fee, these businesses can have their logos placed on the side of the shirt. Patrick adds that word of mouth has also been a big promoter among both

visitors and outside vendors. There is usually heavy competition for vendors (food, craft, political, etc.) to participate in the festival.

History and Education

The festival celebrates the area's agricultural heritage with a rice cooking contest, a Rice Exhibit in the Colleton Museum, and the World's Largest Pot of Mahatma Rice available a few days of the festival.

Lessons Learned

- Some events at the festival are free while others are ticketed. For example, a scheduled street performance in the community amphitheater is free of charge. Registration for the annual Rice Run (5K and 1 Mile Fun Run) ranges from \$10-\$30.
- Use both major and specific event sponsors
- Strategically promote the festival on both local (e.g. Wilmington) and regional (e.g. Raleigh-Durham) television channels and radio stations to reach a wider audience
- Create festival-related products (such as a t-shirt) with the festival logo that may be sold in local stores; vendors and companies may also purchase and add their own logo for an additional fee to further promote both individual business and festival

ADDITIONAL FESTIVALS FOR REVIEW

Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration:

Table 4: Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration Snapshot

Location	Hilton Head, SC
Dates Held	Annually January and February
Year Founded	1996
Website	http://gullahcelebration.com

“Established in 1996, the Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration is an annual event held during the month of February. Since its inception, the Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration was designed to create economic development opportunities for minority business owners, to develop the cultural tourism market and to increase tourism in February on Hilton Head Island, historically the slowest month of the year. While consistently meeting the intended objectives, the Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration continues annually to strategically assess opportunity for continued growth and expansion” (About Us, n.d.).

Original Gullah Festival:

Table 5: Original Gullah Festival Snapshot

Location	Beaufort, SC
Dates Held	Annually every Memorial Day weekend
Year Founded	1996
Website	https://www.originalgullahfestival.org

The Gullah Festival was first established to “honor and recreate the atmosphere of a celebration called Decoration Day.” Over time, the three-day festival has remained true to its roots of providing a family-friendly cultural experience that celebrates the rich history of the Gullah: “Its goal is to reclaim for future generations the beauty and mystery of the disappearing Gullah Culture, a mix of West African legacy and American experience, to help Arts in Education, and to foster a better understanding of, and appreciation for the culture” (Original Gullah Festival, 2020). Every year, the event presents consumer, educational, and historical workshops, demonstrations, exhibits, and classic food.

Penn Center Heritage Days:

Table 6: Penn Center Heritage Days Snapshot

Location	St. Helena, SC
Dates Held	The 2 nd weekend of November
Year Founded	1982
Website	http://www.penncenter.com/heritage-days

“Heritage Days Celebration is a three-day cultural event celebrating Penn School - Penn Center, and the Gullah Geechee history, folk arts, food, music, crafts and West and Central African cultural legacy. Located at Penn Center—formerly the Penn School, one of the first schools for formerly enslaved Africans and their descendants living in the Sea Islands of South Carolina—visitors can experience the unique setting of the 50-acre Penn School National Historic Landmark District. Special events for the weekend include demonstrations of West African/Gullah cultural connections, including: Live cultural demonstrations; Gullah storytellers and re-enactors; Singers, African drummers, and dancers; Educational symposium; Fish fry, crab crack & oyster roast”...and more!” (About Penn Center Heritage Days, 2020).

African American Cultural Festival:

Table 7: African American Cultural Festival Snapshot

Location	Wake County, NC
Dates Held	Annually every Labor Day weekend
Year Founded	2008
Website	http://www.aacfestival.org

The African American Cultural Festival of Raleigh and Wake County is an annual celebration of African American culture as expressed through art, music, food and community. Over the past ten Labor Day weekends, the two-day festival has connected diverse people and families from across our region with local, national, and international artists, performers, food vendors, area business owners, and our local media outlets. The festival has become Raleigh's premiere destination for teaching, sharing, and celebrating the distinctive folk and cultural traditions of African Americans here in North Carolina and from around the world. Major sponsors include Duke Energy and the North Carolina Arts Council.

West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center/Tina Turner Museum (Jacksonville, Tn):

Table 8: West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center Snapshot

Location	Brownsville, TN (Exit 56 off Interstate 40)
Dates Held	Hosts events at the site throughout the year
Year Founded	1998
Website	https://westtnheritage.com/

“A refreshing Southern experience celebrating the music, culture and beauty of the Tennessee Delta! Serving guests since 1998. Here you’ll discover what rural West Tennessee is all about! We are located in the hometown of Anna Mae Bullock. You probably know her as Tina Turner. The “Queen of Rock” is remembered here with an exhibit inside the historic Flagg Grove School, her childhood school, filled with costumes, gold records and memorabilia donated by the Tina. West Tennessee is also home to the Country Blues sound and to pioneers such as “Sleepy” John Estes, Hammie Nixon and Yank Rachell. “Sleepy” John’s last home is on our grounds and open for visitors to peek inside. Though our musical history is extensive, our region is rich in beauty and agriculture. The West Tennessee Cotton Museum helps visitors discover how cotton is produced and managed since the early 1800s. And don’t forget the Scenic Hatchie River and our three fresh water aquariums! This natural and last “wild” river in the lower Mississippi system is a wonder to explore. Some of Tennessee’s best hunting and fishing is here” (About Us, 2020). This particular site hosts events throughout the year, such as the Exit 56 Blues Fest, Tina Turner Heritage Days, and the Summer Jamz Music Fest, and could offer valuable strategies for developing the Cedar Hill African American Heritage Park.

NORTH CAROLINA RICE FESTIVAL PLANNING AND MARKETING

Challenges and Opportunities

As stated previously, only 1.5-2.5% of out-of-town travelers to the coastal region will partake in special events or festivals. This is not good because that means only a small number of this tourist traffic may come for the North Carolina Rice Festival. Further, cultural heritage tourism declined from 2017 to 2018. It may then be more difficult to attract tourists to sites such as the North Carolina Rice Festival or the historic Reaves Chapel. In addition, according to the report on NC coastal tourism, most tourism traffic takes place over the summer, but this event is scheduled for the spring when there will be less tourism traffic. **However, in spite of these challenges, there are multiple opportunities to promote the event and attract tourists.**

Partnerships

In order to be successful, we will require partnerships to support marketing of the North Carolina Rice Festival as both an organization and an event. Below is a list of potential partners to contact in order to get the organization and the event firmly implanted in the minds of local businesses. Once these partnerships are made, fundraising will become much easier holding the 2021 event approaches.

Networking/Marketing Partners

Northern Brunswick County

1. North Carolina Black Leadership Caucus in Bolivia
2. North Brunswick Newcomers Club
3. Concerned Citizens of Southeastern NC in Leland
4. Countywide Community Development Corp in Navassa
5. Churches
6. Champions for Change Outreach Program
7. Brunswick County Habitat for Humanity
8. Leland Area Rotary Club
9. Kiwanis North Brunswick
10. American Legion

Pender County

1. Churches
2. Pender County Christian Services
3. Pender Soil and Water Conservation District
4. Pender Housing Initiative
5. Order of the Eastern Star of North Carolina

New Hanover County

1. Wilmington Downtown Inc. Wilmington, NC
2. Cape Fear Habitat for Humanity
3. Cape Fear Volunteer Center
4. Communities in Schools
5. Community United Effort (CUE) Wilmington, NC
6. Churches

Festival Implementation Partners

State of North Carolina

1. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
2. Department of Commerce

Northern Brunswick County

1. Cedar Hill West Bank Heritage Foundation
2. NC State Extension Master Gardener Association of Brunswick
3. Visit Leland Tourism Development Authority Leland, NC
4. Friends of the Leland Cultural Arts Center Inc.
5. North Brunswick Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center Belville, NC
6. Art League of Leland

Pender County

1. North Carolina Blueberry Festival Association
2. Burgaw Depot Historic Preservation Foundation
3. Pender Education Partnership
4. The New Legacy Foundation

New Hanover County

1. Arts Council of Wilmington and New Hanover County
2. Brooklyn Arts Music Academy
3. Cape Fear Housing Land Trust
4. Cape Fear Resource Conservation and Development
5. Chamber Music Wilmington
6. DREAMS of Wilmington and The Garage at DREAMS
7. Food Bank of Central & Eastern NC Wilmington, NC
8. Historic Wilmington Foundation
9. Historical Society of Lower Cape Fear
10. Kids Making It
11. Alban Elved Dance Company

Sponsorship Partners

Northern Brunswick County

1. Brunswick County Economic Development Foundation in Leland
2. Southern Dames of America - Southport Chapter
3. Brunswick County Chamber of Commerce

Pender County

1. Pender Memorial Hospital
2. Catholic Charities

New Hanover County

1. The Full Belly Project
2. Cape Fear Community College Wilmington, NC

Target Market

Based on a report of coastal tourism in North Carolina, the target market for out-of-town tourism is middle-aged (44), married white couples with children. Further, the target is middle-class given that the average/mean income is \$75,000 for out-of-town visitors with a median income of

\$92,000. However, there could be an untapped market of Black professional parties who may be more interested in cultural heritage tourism than middle-classed White families. The North Carolina Rice Festival Inc. has already been capitalizing on marketing Black emigrants from Northern Brunswick County to other states like Virginia and New Jersey. Those networks could be tapped to expand into a Black tourist audience who meets the same age and income specs as current coastal NC visitors, but who don't want a sanitized picture of Gullah Geechee history and rice farming. Advertising must begin more than 6 months before the North Carolina Rice Festival, i.e. October 2020 or sooner because the tourism report also indicates that most out-of-town travelers will decide their vacation destination six months in advance.

Event Marketing

PAPER MEDIA

Newspaper articles and advertisements could be run in a plethora of metro areas that already feed into coastal NC tourism such as:

- The Triangle
- The Triad
- Charlotte
- Ohio
- Maryland
- D.C.
- Richmond/Norfolk, VA (Tidewater area)
- NY/NJ
- Tennessee
- Philadelphia

It may also make sense to advertise along the Gullah Geechee Heritage Trail where there may already be people interested in learning more about this rich history. Those areas are:

- Savannah, GA
- Charleston, SC

THE GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSION

As mentioned earlier in this report, the Commission was established to promote festivals and other special events, along the corridor, to educate the public about the Gullah Geechee history and culture. This commission can be a valuable marketing tool for the activities in Northern Brunswick County, since they have a preexisting infrastructure and marketing network. There are a number of ways the leverage the Commission and their network as an asset.

- 1) Contact the Commission for photos or videos that can be used for news media or documentary film purposes. The Commission is willing to share their directory of images in .jpg format suitable for broadcast, print, or online. Images can be received by contacting Executive Director Heather Hodges at 843-818-8457.
 - a. The director is able to share images via email, Dropbox, or USB drive.

- 2) Contact the Commission is willing to support heritage festivals in the corridor by posting them to the events calendar on visitgullahgeechee.com
 - a. Events can be submitted to the calendar using <https://gullahgeecheecorridor.org/contact-us/>
- 3) Contact Executive Director Heather Hodges to request that the Commission serve as a formal stakeholder or consultant for the North Carolina Rice Festival.
- 4) Contact Executive Director Heather Hodges to request technical assistance in interpreting Gullah Geechee history.
- 5) Submit a public speaking request or other public education program request for the North Carolina Rice Festival.
 - a. Requests can be submitted at <https://gullahgeecheecorridor.org/contact-us/>
- 6) Submit items to be showcased in the monthly newsletter or at the quarterly public meeting.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The North Carolina Rice Festival would benefit from a full-scale social media campaign. This will include postings on the most popular social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Further, every post will be branded with the hashtags #NCRiceFestival and #NCRF2021.

Instagram

Instagram is a great platform for sharing photos. Not only can ad space be purchased on Instagram, but it can also be used as a way of connecting with sponsors and potential visitors. As of now, there are two Instagram accounts connected to the festival. The first is @NCRiceFestival2020 which has only six followers and no posts. The second is @NCRiceFestival which has only one post from 2018 and five followers. A number of changes need to be made in order to have a more effective presence on Instagram.

- 1) In the early stages, it makes sense to have only one account on each social media platform. Having too many accounts will be difficult to manage and will confuse the public as they will be unsure which page to follow, or uninterested in following multiple pages. All North Carolina Rice Festival information can be compiled to one profile.
- 2) A year should not be included in the username because that will necessitate changing the username every year.
- 3) As COVID-19 has progressed, many celebrities and social media influencers have used the “live” feature to stay connected with their supporters. Going live can be a effective way to keep people engaged with our page.

- 4) At a minimum, one original post should be made every week.
- 5) Follow accounts of those who might be interested in the festival and have a presentable profile, so they want to follow back!

Facebook

The North Carolina Rice Festival has a Facebook (FB) page which can be found by searching @NCRiceFestival or NCRiceFestival2020. It's pretty active right now, which is great!

- 1) Any fundraising or advertising events related to the festival can be created on Eventbrite and shared via the organizations FB page. The nice thing about using Eventbrite is that people who are not familiar with the event, and thus aren't following the organization on social media, will be able to find the festival by searching for things to do in the area.
- 2) Encourage everyone who has liked the FB page to also like us on Instagram. Many people who use Facebook also use Instagram.
- 3) Consider purchasing FB ads to tell people about both our channel and the festival itself.

Tik Tok

Tik Tok has emerged as one of the most popular social networking platforms on which people can post short videos. Tik Tok can be used to post short videos as we count down to the festival. The NAACP has used social media strategically to campaign for things such as completing the 2020 Census. This organization serves as a great model for the North Carolina Rice Festival, Inc.

- 1) Our group can participate in internet challenges, integrating North Carolina Rice Festival themes, and drive traffic to our page.
- 2) People like funny content, so try to incorporate humor when possible!
- 3) Consider purchasing Tik Tok ads to tell people about both our channel and the festival itself.

YouTube

One of the needs that has emerged during this process is the need for more historic accounts of Gullah Geechee culture that is specific to North Carolina or Northern Brunswick County. One thing that can be done is to interview various people who have knowledge about this history.

These interviews can be included in a larger documentary about Gullah in NC and small excerpts can be shared on YouTube. Further, YouTube can be used to be shared stories about influential figures from Brunswick County. The North Carolina Rice Festival Board has already begun a series of nine YouTube videos, with the first being published on May 31, 2020. The below recommendations can supplement these videos already in production.

- 1) Consider have an North Carolina Rice Festival t-shirt or other swag and have giveaways for people who are subscribed to our YouTube channel. This can be a great way to get more followers.
- 2) Also, ask people to tag friends in the comments of videos to drive additional traffic to the page.
- 3) Consider purchasing YouTube ads to tell people about both our channel and the festival itself.

FILM

Documentary filmmaking can be a useful tool for the North Carolina Rice Festival and for both marketing the North Carolina Rice Festival and showcasing the rich cultural history of Northern Brunswick County. Documentary Filmmaker Claudia Stack of Pender County, NC has a wealth of experience with cultural heritage filmmaking and can be retained for the purposes of this project.

Purpose

- A. One option is that a film can be made about cultural aspects of Northern Brunswick County including Gullah Geechee history.
- B. Another option is that a film can be made documenting the return of the festival. Some backstage moments can be captured highlighting the process of bringing back the festival. Additionally, moments from the festival can be captured during the festival and used for marketing future festivals.

Cost

Claudia estimates that the cost of producing a film would be \$500-\$1,000 per minute. This covers the time shooting, editing, etc. Therefore, a five-minute film would require a budget of \$2,500-\$5,000, a thirty-minute film would require \$15,000-\$30,000 and a sixty-minute film would require \$30,000-\$60,000.

There are a number of options for grants which can be attained to support the cost of the film. For instance, the National Geographic offers Exploration Grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000 and they can be used to support storytelling.

Other

Consider sharing ads and business information on a variety of other platforms such as Yelp, Trip Advisor, word of mouth, or among the network of partners developed from the aforementioned list.

NORTH CAROLINA RICE FESTIVAL IMPLEMENTATION

The North Carolina Rice Festival will take place over two days in March 2021. There will be opportunities for related events surrounding the festival, beyond the festival itself. In November 2020, the Board hopes to hold a Gullah Geechee Arts and Crafts Show.

- Many businesses whose work is not directly related to Gullah may be able to capitalize on the festival. For instance, at events like this, customers may be interested in businesses who sell water, portable fans, visors, umbrellas, sunglasses, sunscreen, or other items to protect from the weather. Consumers may also wish to have a commemorative souvenir of the event which could offer a business opportunity to t-shirt companies or other such businesses.

Festival Development: Event Considerations

1. Secure the proper location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can the event be held to accommodate 2,500 guests?
2. AV equipment: what AV equipment is needed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound needs to be in place for bands and other performers • MC to make announcements during the event • Music playing outside of the main stage
3. Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to secure event insurance
4. Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the parking situation? • Will we need shuttles?
5. Permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which department issues event permits? • What is the cost for permits?
6. First aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a medical tent to handle first aid
7. Check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout maps of the event
8. Concessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food trucks: try to get cultural food such as African, Caribbean, & Creole • Support as many local restaurants as possible <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Booty’s Soul Food Restaurant – Wilmington ii. Jamaica House Sports Bar & Grill iii. Jam Rock Sports Bar & Grill

9. Kids Play Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add an event area where kids can enjoy a play space
10. Beer Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include an open-air space to serve beer & food
11. Arts Contest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options for hosting an arts contest where the public can view submissions at the festival
12. Live Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with bands who performed in previous years and gauge their interest in performing at future events
13. Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swahili Coast (African Goods Store) • \$75 minimum vendor fee • Vendor applications will have a deadline of one month advance of the festival. A \$50 late fee will be assessed for vendor applications after the deadline. • No late applications will be accepted with 14 days of the event. • Arts and crafts vendors, in keeping with previous festivals. <p>Sample Vendor Options from BBQ Fest on the Neuse:</p> <div data-bbox="586 968 1336 1682" style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p>NEW for the 2020 BBQ Fest on the Neuse are Vendor Priority Zones. Based on years of a similar festival layout, we are giving vendors flexibility between their budget and potential customer foot traffic.</p> <p>Priority Zone 1 = \$150 for a 10'x10' space Priority Zone 2 = \$125 for a 10'x10' space Priority Zone 3 = \$100 for a 10'x10' space Priority Zone 4 = \$75 for a 10'x10' space</p> <p>For example if you need a 10'x20' space in Priority Zone 1, then your vendor fee would be a Quantity of 2 x \$150 = \$300.</p> <p>Another example, if you need a 10'x30' space in Priority Zone 4, then your vendor fee would be a Quantity of 3 x \$75 = \$225.</p> <p>UPDATE 1/20/2020 - We are NO LONGER accepting face painters for all zones. UPDATE 1/21/2020 - We are NO LONGER accepting lemonade for all zones. UPDATE 1/31/2020 - We are NO LONGER accepting funnel cakes. UPDATE 2/6/2020 - We are NO LONGER accepting kettle corn. UPDATE 2/27/2020 - We are NO LONGER accepting snow cone/slushies or Italian ice/shaved ice for all zones. UPDATE 3/4/2020 - We are NO LONGER accepting jewelry vendors. UPDATE 3/11/2020 - Priority Zone 1 is SOLD OUT.</p> </div>

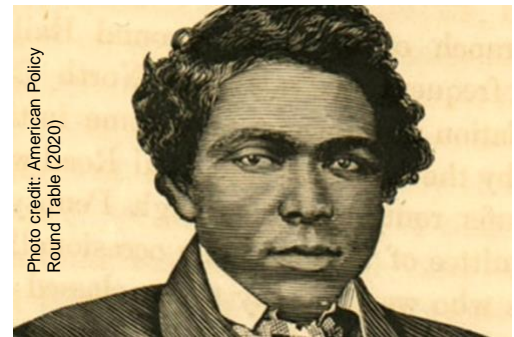
Event Development: Cultural Heritage Considerations

Part 1: Historic Figures in Northern Brunswick County

As mentioned previously, this area has a number of historic figures. Historic figures are important to mention because they can be highlighted in cultural heritage exhibits and events like the North Carolina Rice Festival. Below are but a few historic figures that historians can further research. This research can then be built into exhibits, monuments, museums, heritage trail hot spots, or other cultural heritage features.

Abraham Galloway

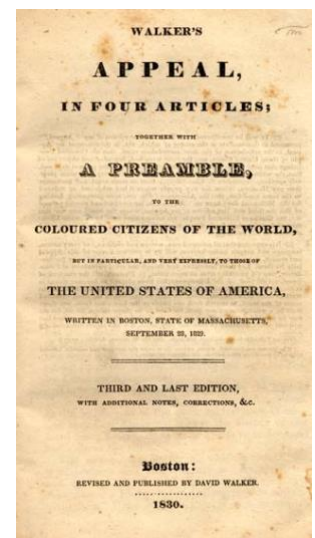
According to a short film published by the North Carolina Museum of History, Abraham Galloway was born in 1837 in a small fishing village which is now called Southport. He was born a slave but escaped north at the age of 18. Later, he returned to the south as a spy and even rescued his mother from a tough and heavily guarded situation in Wilmington, NC.



Due to all of these efforts, he has been described as a “great American freedom fighter.” He was also a participant in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Among his many valiant efforts, in the spring of 1863, he and John Randolph led thousands of men out of slavery. Additionally, he called the first convention of former slaves in New Bern, NC and was even elected one of the state’s first African American legislators in 1868. However, after surviving multiple assassination attempts, he died of a sudden illness in 1870 at the young age of 33. At the time of his death, his funeral was the largest in North Carolina’s history (Clinard, 2020).

David Walker and David Walker’s Appeal

According to records, David Walker was born a slave around 1785 in Wilmington, NC. There is some speculation that David Walker is from the Cedar Hill Plantation, but that has yet to be confirmed. However, as an adult he resided in Boston, MA. Boston is where Walker ultimately died on August 6, 1830. Official records indicate that he died of tuberculosis, but there has been speculation that the true cause of death was poisoning as a result of some of his controversial publications. Before his death, Walker was a successful abolitionist, clothing store owner, and writer. In 1829, he published *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the Worlds*, more commonly referred to as *Walker’s Appeal*. This appeal was a call-to-action for slaves to revolt against the establishment.



Part 2: The Big Pieces of Gullah

Food

Gullah cuisine is one of the products of the Gullah Geechee community. The Gullah people farmed rice plantations of the Lowcountry back in the 1700s. Today, the Southern region cherishes their traditional food customs. Gullah recipes are made using the primary ingredients of rice, simmered vegetables, and fresh seafood. In particular, oysters, shrimp, grits, and okra are commonly incorporated. The flavorful dishes are a reflection of the rich Gullah history.

To honor this legacy, we would like to incorporate a cook off into the festival. In previous years, the festival had a rice cooking contest only; however, other dishes can be considered. These sorts of things are common for festivals in the area and around the country. For instance, in Lenoir County, there is an annual fish stew cook off which takes place in Kinston and honors the fish stew meal that is local to North Carolina.

Chefs can sign up to participate in a cook-off at the same time that they purchase their tickets for the festival. The cook-off can have one dish, and be modeled around the BBQ Fest on the Neuse in which contestants compete for who has the best ribs, or conversely there can be multiple smaller competitions of about five contestants each, and a different dish for each competition. Below are some potential dishes for a cook-off.

- Gullah Rice
- Fried Corn Cakes
- Peaches and Cream Pie
- Shrimp and Grits

The competition(s) can have two levels of judging. First, a panel of expert judges will be convened for professional level judging. Second, festival attendees can purchase plates from competitors and cast their ballots for the popular vote.

A sponsorship can be attained in order to provide a first-place prize for each competition if the festival planners choose to do multiple small competitions. If festival planners elect to do one big competition, then a first, second, and third place prize can be awarded.

Religion

Since churches were central to the cultural experience of the people in Northern Brunswick County, it should be a central component of the festival as well. The festival can be a great platform to amplify the work of the Cedar Hill West Bank Foundation in rehabbing Reaves Chapel.

Education

- **Panel:** a panel of scholars, historians, and writers can be convened to provide an educational session about various pieces of cultural heritage related to the Gullah Geechee history. Audience members can submit questions to ask of the panelists

and the session can be recorded as a podcast and shared in the future for people who were unable to attend the festival,

- **Film:** If a documentary is filmed by Mrs. Claudia Stack or another filmmaker, the film can be played during the festival for attendees.
- **Rosenwald Schools Exhibit:** An exhibit can be curated to showcase the history of Rosenwald schools and attendees will be able to walk through the exhibit and learn about the contributions of the school on children in the County.

Overarching Sense of Community

The Gullah Geechee people had a strong sense of community with one another. By even holding the North Carolina Rice Festival, we are honoring that sense of community. One way that this can be shown concretely is by offering as many opportunities for unity and community as possible. One option may be to have a unity music circle, in which attendees are able to take part in a musical experience, playing and listening to traditional Gullah music.

TIMELINE

The initial intention was to hold the North Carolina Rice Festival in March 2021. However, due to the wide-spread impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a lot of uncertainty around the health and safety of holding events such as this. For this reason, the timeline may be severely impacted, and the event may be canceled or postponed for 2021.

9 Months Ahead of Time	Initial tourism development plan
8 Months Ahead of Time	Secure blocks of rooms at local hotels, determine event location, & secure vendors
7 Months Ahead of Time	Secure entertainment, solidify partnerships, and create branding scheme Begin advertising in geographic regions previously identified
5 or 6 Months Ahead of Time	Start ticket sales, create emergency management plan, secure event insurance, coordinate with police department for event security, and secure event permits
3 or 4 Months Ahead of Time	Begin advertising for cooking contest contestants, get AV rental contracts, create site map of the event, purchase wristbands, secure local private Wi-Fi network for ticketing equipment, secure event staff
Two Months Ahead of Time	1. Cut off for vendor registration
Thirty Days Ahead of Time	1. Determine Rain Date for Event 2. Get on local news outlets to drive traffic
March of Each Year (tentatively)	1. The event takes place!

FUTURE PROJECTS

This section describes projects that could not be included in this Scope of Work, but which could provide a valuable addition to economic development or tourism in Northern Brunswick County. The following are projects that our team proposes be considered in the future.

1. Restored House

- a. The idea behind this project is to restore a house to the same period as the Reaves Chapel restoration, which is around 1910-1920.
- b. The goal would be to show where African Americans really lived back in the day and to include artifacts from homes in the area as part of the tourist attraction—e.g. rolling pins, wood stove, etc.
- c. This could be used as a way to collect community stories, drive community building. Other places have done similar projects. For instance, the African American History Museum in Washington D.C. has an African American housing unit as a part of their exhibit *DEFENDING FREEDOM, DEFINING FREEDOM: Era of Segregation 1876-1968*. Further, in 2013, the museum added a slave cabin to their collection with a very similar purpose as the restored house we are proposing: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/about/news/slave-cabin-donated-national-museum-african-american-history-and-culture>.

2. Annex for Rosenwald School

- a. The idea behind this would to use the annex for educational programming.
- b. It may also be rented out for special events

3. Juke Joint

- a. Juke Joints were social gathering places for Black people during the early 1900's. To include an exhibit of a Juke Joint along the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Trail would show a more complete picture of life for African Americans during this time period.
- b. Again, this could be used for educational programming as well as cultural tourism.

4. Gullah Geechee Heritage Marathon

- a. Marathon runners travel around the country and globe to participate in races. This project could be used a fund raiser to raise dollars for cultural heritage projects in the community.

5. Rice Art Car Parade

- a. The idea behind this project would be to have additional smaller events, beyond the North Carolina Rice Festival in order to keep the momentum going year-round. Car shows and parades are popular tourist draws that can be capitalized upon in Northern Brunswick County. Since the North Carolina Rice Festival takes place in the spring, this event could take place in the summer months, as that is a popular season for tourist travel.

6. History Harvest

- a. In many communities, when stories are not passed from elders to younger generations, the history associated with those stories become lost forever. The idea behind this project would be to keep that from happening to the history of Northern Brunswick County and the Gullah Geechee history more specifically.
- b. This project would be used for collecting oral histories, artifacts in the community, and digitizing photos.

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