



TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MASTER PLAN FOR ST. MARY'S COUNTY

The St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development, its Division of Tourism, and the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce are working together to create the County's first Tourism & Hospitality Master Plan. This undertaking is part of the larger Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy now underway, and as such, illustrates the important role tourism is projected to play in the County's future.

The Tourism and Hospitality Industry includes visitor attractions such as museums, parks, wineries, agri-tourism sites and sports venues, and amenities such as hotels, restaurants, marinas, and golf courses, as well as a variety of local businesses. Spending by visitors at these locations contributes over \$131 million dollars to the local economy. Additionally, tourism assets feature significantly in business attraction and retention efforts. Enhancing the quality and variety of the County's recreational opportunities, destinations and events, and ensuring the hospitality business community and local infra-structure can meet future demands, will depend on a well-reasoned comprehensive strategy.

The Strategic Advisory Group (SAG), an advisory services and strategic planning firm with headquarters in Atlanta, will lead the process. SAG works with communities in economic development and revitalization, hospitality and tourism, and sports and conventions. The firm's tourism marketing and strategic planning efforts include projects for Atlantic City, Denver, and Charlotte.

The process begins with a research and analysis phase during which the current state of the local Tourism and Hospitality Industry will be reviewed, strengths and challenges identified, and the County's competitiveness as a visitor destination assessed. Prospective markets and areas for growth and development will also be identified. The plan will grow out of those findings and will provide a roadmap for tourism development that is specific to St. Mary's County. A subcomponent of the plan will be a "South County Action Plan" to kick-start tourism growth in the southern portion of the County.

Local businesses and Tourism and Hospitality Industry stakeholders will play a critical role throughout the process. Work on the plan started in September, 2015 and is expected to take eight months to complete.