

# **Welcome to Savannah's Waterfront February 2020**



Thank you for your interest in Savannah's Waterfront.

## 2020 Board of Directors – General

- Pete Gagne, Savannah Coca-Cola Bottling Co., United, Inc.
- Brad Gibson, Capital A Productions, LLC
- Marianne Greer, Ideal Hospitality Investments, Inc.
- Jeff Hewitt, Visit Savannah
- Michael Owens, Tourism Leadership Council
- Anne Simmons, Exotic Cigars & Gifts
- Rhett Strickland, Savannah Candy Kitchen
- Willie Tuten, Tondees Tavern
- Vince Zambito, Bayou Café



Savannah's Waterfront is governed by a 13-member board of directors.

## **2020 Board of Directors – Executive Committee**

- Ansley Williams, Live Oak Restaurants, President
- Mickey Minnick, Kelly Tours, Vice President
- Geoff Repella, Byrd Cookie Company, Treasurer
- Chelsea Williams, Live Oak Restaurants, Secretary



Our board includes an executive committee made up of our officers.

## Staff

- Julie Ford Musselman, Executive Director  
[Julie@savannahwaterfront.com](mailto:Julie@savannahwaterfront.com)
- Brigitte VanBaelen-Szychowski, Operations Manager  
[Brigitte@savannahwaterfront.com](mailto:Brigitte@savannahwaterfront.com)



Our board supervises a staff of two – Julie Ford Musselman, Executive Director and Brigitte VanBalen-Szychowski, Operations Manager.

We're very excited about the challenge of working to market and take care of this very special and significant area of our city that we all cherish. It is a privilege to help elevate our beautiful waterfront into an exceptional environment for all.

## **Our Mission**

- Preserve and maintain the waterfront's historic character
- Maintain and improve the waterfront's scenic nature and appearance
- Promote and stimulate public interest in the waterfront
- Promote cooperation and mutual assistance among property owners and businesses along the waterfront



So let's get started. Who are we and what do we do? Our association was formed way back in 1973 with a mission that is still relevant today –

To preserve our history

Maintain our appearance

Promote the area to the public and

Promote cooperation among stakeholder businesses

## 2020 Landscape

- Changing perceptions
- New developments across the waterfront
- More competitive environment
- Needs have changed over the last decade
- Known as a festival organization
- Time for a pivot



Have you heard your neighbor, friend, or colleague say “ I don’t go to Riverstreet.” Or “Don’t go to Riverstreet.” Most people have. And that’s what we are up against.

And our goal is to change old perceptions. We have amazing new developments happening across the Waterfront that are changing the area already.

We are facing new challenges but also new opportunities. The fact of the matter is that the needs of Savannah’s Waterfront have changed immensely over the last decade.

For quite some time, the Waterfront Association has been considered simply a festival organization - but in fact, we have

the potential to be SO much more than that.

The waterfront needs some attention, some TLC, so that we can remain competitive in this ever-changing market. We have got to think BIG but take thoughtful and measured steps to achieving our goals

SO with all of this in mind, the board decided it was time for a pivot in our organization to better meet these needs.

## 2020 Strategy - Marketing

- Year-round destination
- New Website
  - Member driven rather than association centric
- Increase Social Media Engagement



This summer when the board began determining our path towards a new revitalized organization, we took a long hard look at our current brand, our target audiences, and our future opportunities. The river and the waterfront are integral to our businesses, but we have several addresses – including Hutchinson Island, Bay Street, Factor’s Walk, Eastern Wharf, the Distillery District, the Plant Riverside District, and of course the most recognized address -River Street. But we needed a shared identity. How could we promote our whole area? And promote it all year – not just when we produce our signature events?

We needed a new website in the worst way, member driven and informative to our audiences. And we needed to increase our engagement across our existing social media channels.



Keeping in mind that the word ‘association’ means nothing to our guests, it’s the waterfront atmosphere that resonates with them - be it watching the ships go by, enjoying our great food, historic sites, unique shopping, fun tours or amazing nightlife. People identify with our area from their experiences and memories. **And the waterfront, where the colony of Georgia began, belongs to all of us.**

Paying homage to the association’s past history and looking ahead to the future, we made the decision to change to a new brand: both the Savannah Waterfront Association and our collective area will now be branded as **“Savannah’s Waterfront.”**

## Brand Shift

SAVANNAH'S  
WATERFRONT



SAVANNAH'S  
WATERFRONT

The letters are tall, like our historic restored cotton warehouses, and the waves represent our past, present and future. It's a fresh, new take on a classic. And it's only our third logo in 47 years.

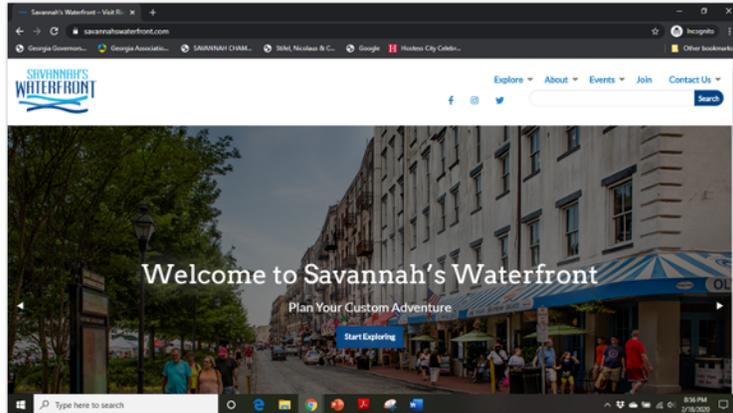
## **New Website**

savannahswaterfront.com



The hub in the wheel of our new brand is our new website: Savannahswaterfront.com. The site is an excellent resource for our members, guests and stakeholders.

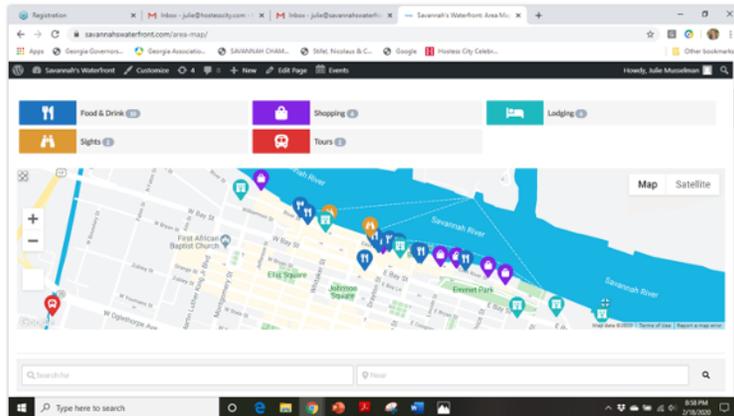
## New Website



The new site is very member-centric instead of association-centric. We want our guests to be able to easily access information about the things to do and see along the waterfront. Which restaurant should I go to for dinner? Who has the best live music at night?

Guests can explore our interactive map with member listings, they can sort by food & drink, shop, lodging, sights. And get directions on how to get down there, by car, and for most of our guests who are visitors staying in the historic district, by foot.

## New Website



Also, there's an event section with our signature annual events as well as a calendar of events that allows other event organizers and members to submit their events happening on the waterfront. Further promoting the idea that there's always a reason to come down to Savannah's Waterfront!

Vendors and entertainers will now be able to easily and seamlessly submit their information for consideration for events.

There is an about section with our history, frequently asked questions, and our leadership.

## 2020 Strategy - Experience

- Quality Events
- Authentic
- Unique
- Creative
- Inclusive of Businesses, Visitors, Residents, Government and Other Stakeholders



The second piece of our strategy is the guest experience  
No matter where someone is coming from....  
Whether they are local or a visitor  
No matter why they are coming down.....  
For dinner, a drink, a tour or an event  
Their experience has to be exceptional  
To ensure that is the case, we need to have a holistic and  
comprehensive approach to caring for our Waterfront

This includes producing high quality events that activate our  
public spaces in an impactful way and bring business to our  
merchants throughout the year.

## 2020 Strategy - Experience

- Festival of St. Patrick
- Independence Day Celebration
- Oktoberfest
- Christmas on the River
- New Year's Celebration



We've streamlined our annual event schedule to include 5 signature events. This new approach will allow us to focus on quality production while keeping our finger on the pulse of the third piece of our strategy, Infrastructure.

## 2020 Strategy - Infrastructure

- Cleanliness
- Repair
- Safety
- Enforcement



Improvements to the Waterfront begin with our merchants, and we recognize that we have to do more as individual businesses to maintain our front and back porches. **We need to look like a place that people want to be.**

We are also advocating on the Waterfront's behalf to make sure our concerns are top priorities for our city officials, establishing a baseline of services as well as identifying additional needs due to our historic nature, be it streetscapes or other initiatives.

We've already made progress with lighting, repairs on the plaza and improved cleaning policies such as pressure washing, and litter pick up.

## 2020 Strategy - Infrastructure

○ [hello@savannahswaterfront.com](mailto:hello@savannahswaterfront.com)



We plan to see even more improvements throughout the year. If you see something that needs attention, a light that's out for example or a cobblestone hazard, we are asking businesses to snap a photo and email it to us at [hello@savannahswaterfront.com](mailto:hello@savannahswaterfront.com).

We aren't looking to replace an existing relationship you have with a city department or employee, but to provide a communication link where it's needed.

## 2020 Strategy - Leadership

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Transparency



The fourth and final piece of our strategy is leadership. We are committed to strong, transparent leadership, with collaboration and communication driving all that we do.

During this transition we have established and reestablished relationships with the TLC, Visit Savannah, the Savannah Chamber of Commerce, the Savannah Downtown Business Association, the St. Patrick's Parade Committee, City Market, and at least 14 departments of the City of Savannah including the SPD.

All of this is a work in progress, but we've made some incredible strides in a relatively short amount of time and will actively strive to continue improving our communication with our

members and stakeholders every single day.



Now on to the hospitality industry's favorite event of the year: The Festival of St. Patrick will be held in three short weeks – Friday March 13 – Sunday March 15. So why the date split from the parade? How did we choose the dates?

Well, we took a hard look at the historical data of wristband, beverage and merchant sales as well as hotel occupancy and visitor inquiries. All point to a weekend festival when the parade is on a weekday. No matter whether the parade falls on a Thursday or a Tuesday, the highest revenue day is Saturday. The past has proven that our emergency personnel, our merchants and our city is stretched too thin over a 4 or 5-day festival.

So three days or 48 hours it is - this year is the first time we believe that the festival has been separated from the parade, allowing us to use our assets most effectively. This change also allows emergency services personnel to schedule appropriately over this celebratory period. Hosting it over a weekend also allows more locals to attend – you don't have to be on vacation to come down to the festival.

After this year's experiment is successful, we plan to go back to the Mayor and city council in May of this year, 60 days post-event, to pass the ordinance that determines our future festival dates. This calendar shift will allow the city, Savannah's Waterfront and City Market to spend the proper amount of time planning for an event of this size and give us the opportunity to book top level entertainment and add to our list of quality sponsors.

Lots of parts of event planning aren't really sexy, like sanitation and security, but they're integral to success. We've spent a significant amount of time on the foundation of the event so that we can provide a safe, clean, fun environment for all while showcasing our beautiful city.

Our new security plan has been developed in concert with the Savannah Police Department so that our off-duty personnel are trained on the city's incident response plan and can communicate effectively during the event.



So what's it going to look like? We're losing the leprechaun hats, pots of gold, coins and beads.



And moving toward a Celtic Classy theme – bringing a more sophisticated look, feel, and message to honor and respect the importance of the celebration of St. Patrick.



And we're into providing the who, what, when, and where to our guests to help them navigate the festival.



Updating our theme better reflects the personality of our city. And it will help us add to the list of national brand sponsors we've confirmed for this year. National brands want to invest their assets and activations at events that portray their same level of quality.



We will have great live entertainment across 5 stages throughout the festival zone, 3 along the waterfront and 2 in City Market. You will find the entertainment schedule, festival map, food & beverages, wristband rules, prohibited items, all listed on the new website. Guests can even purchase wristbands in advance right now.

Here's a couple of festival facts:

Wristbands are \$10 and it's a cover charge for the street party. All guest drinking on the street in the festival zone must purchase a wristband.

Guests must purchase a wristband for each day they attend. Wristbands are not required to drink inside establishments within the festival zone.

Now this part is important:

Wristbands and bars are cash only – we don't have the infrastructure to support credit card machines. On the bars - beer, wine, and seltzer prices are low - only \$5 - \$7 and only one drink per person is allowed, so you can imagine the lines if we used credit card machines that can't process because of lack of connectivity. We bring in extra ATMs and have the wristband presale option via credit card purchase available on the website.

## **You can expect Savannah's Waterfront to:**

- Effectively collaborate & represent SW in the community
- Provide a collective voice for members
- Market and promote our year-round destination
- Approach cleanliness & infrastructure improvements in an organized way
- Promote Safety at all levels
- Activate the public spaces with quality events
- Facilitate quarterly membership meetings



You can expect the new Savannah's Waterfront to:

Collaborate

Provide a collective voice

Market the attraction year-round

Help improve cleanliness and infrastructure

Promote safety

Activate the plaza with quality events and

Communicate regularly with our members

## Revised Membership Dues Structure

○ Per Location:

- \$250 Retail Store
- \$250 Non-Profit Organization
- \$500 Restaurant
- \$500 Service Provider/Supporting Business
- \$750 Lodging
- \$1,000 Building



We have revised our dues structure to allow more participation from all the different types of business that hinge their success on a thriving waterfront.

We'd love to have all of you join our efforts by becoming a member of Savannah's Waterfront. Not surprisingly you can join on the new website!

**Thank You!**

**SAVANNAH'S  
WATERFRONT**



Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the reinvigoration of the Savannah Waterfront Association. We are focused on the future and look forward to working with you.