

# **Cultural Heritage Tourism District 1st Quarterly Report**

**July 24, 2013**

**Prepared by: Design Arts Studio for the Panama City Downtown North CRA**



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**Introduction**

On June 1, 2013, Panama City Downtown North Community Redevelopment Agency (DTNCRA) and Design Arts Studio (DAS) entered into a contract for the completion of a feasibility study, master implementation plan, and a replicable community model for a Cultural Heritage Tourism District within the DTNCRA. This quarterly report documents the progress of the project from commencement to date and the activities undertaken by DAS from June 3, 2013 to July 18, 2013. Per the work plan included in the contract, the DAS team completed Phase 1 (Data Collection) and is now reaching the conclusion of Phase 2 (Community Outreach) of the project.



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### Phase 1: Data Collection (June 3 – June 24)

| Activity   | Action taken  |
|--|---|
| <b>Study base-line data</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studied Downtown North CRA Update and appendices for existing assets (report received on May 17, 2013)</li> <li>• Studied GIS data (received on June 11, 2013)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Familiarization with project area</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visited the District area (May 1, 2013 and June 26, 2013)</li> <li>• Attended Gumbo Gitdown festival (June 15, 2013)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Data collection</b>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Took photographs at Gumbo Gitdown</li> <li>• Visited the Belmont De Villiers Historic District in Pensacola, FL (June 20, 2013)</li> <li>• Visited the Railroad Square Art Park in Tallahassee, FL (May 22, 2013)</li> <li>• Researched and studied similar cultural tourism projects elsewhere in the country</li> <li>• Collected contact information for prominent community members and key stakeholders</li> <li>• Collected residential addresses for property owners and residents</li> </ul> |
| <b>Identification of key stakeholders</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made contact with key stakeholders as identified in meetings with the CRA staff</li> <li>• Made contact and set up future focus group meetings with key stakeholders in the areas of tourism, economic growth, art, and history</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Development of public participation tools</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created a website for the project</li> <li>• Created tools for public input through the internet and embedded in website</li> <li>• Created project Facebook page</li> <li>• Developed a detailed public participation plan for the project</li> </ul>   |
| <b>First community meeting</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carried out flyer mail-out to 1,066 households (June 14, 2013)</li> <li>• Contacted and invited officials and stakeholders to community meeting</li> <li>• Contacted 16 District churches to introduce the project and notify about June 27 community meeting</li> <li>• Hosted the first community meeting with attendance between 160-200 individuals</li> </ul>   |

**Study base-line data**

In fulfillment of contract Section A item 3, to utilize existing data for pre-development analysis, the DAS Team studied the Downtown North CRA Update and appendices for existing assets in the District. The report was received from DTNCRA staff by the team on May 17, 2013. The team familiarized itself with the recommendations made by IBI upon which the Cultural Heritage Tourism District is based. The team studied GIS data acquired from the City GIS department on June 11, 2013 for ownership details and vacant land parcels and the location of existing physical features such as institutions, parks, gateways, and infrastructure.

**Familiarization with project area**

On June 15 2013, the DAS team visited the Gumbo Gitdown festival that is held annually as part of the celebrations of Black Music Month in Glenwood. The team mingled with the community and took photographs at the event. This visit helped identify community assets such as local musicians, a performing arts group, and a restaurant.

The presence of the DAS team was noted by the media:

<http://www.newsherald.com/entertainment/historic-district-celebrates-gumbo-git-down-1.159588>

Some photographs taken by the DAS team at the Gumbo Gitdown are shown below:



Local dance group performing



Kiosks and vendors at the Gumbo Gitdown



Winners of the contests



Dance troupe

The team conducted a visit to the District to take a visual account of the area and to visually identify assets and the location of restaurants and businesses, parks, and centers of cultural activities on May 1, 2013 and June 26, 2013.

**Data collection and study of similar projects**

During the second week of June, the DAS team collected District parcel information, developed mailing lists, created a flyer to announce the June 27 community meeting, and arranged for flyer mail out to District residents and property owners. The flyers were mailed out on June 14, 2013 to 1,066 households.

The team developed a list of key stakeholders and experts. As a starting point to address Section B item 1 of the contract, the team has identified experts in the areas of tourism, economic growth, and art and contacted them to set up focus group meetings for July 10, 2013.

Per Section A item 8 of the contract outlining study of similar projects, on June 20, 2013 The DAS team visited the Belmont De Villiers Historic District in Pensacola to meet with



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Mr. Eugene Franklin. The team discussed ideas for the Glenwood Historic Cultural District with Mr. Franklin and his associate and artist Ms. Sonja Evans. The team also took a tour of the De Villiers Historic District to observe how Black history and culture can be harnessed and fostered to improve the social and economic wellbeing of an area and community.

Some photographs of the team’s visit to Belmont De Villiers:



The team visiting the Gumbo Art Gallery



The team outside the famous 5 Sisters Cafe



Discussing infrastructure and physical uplift details

The team also visited Railroad Square Art Park in Tallahassee on May 22, 2013 to observe an arts-based tourist destination. Some photographs from the visit are included below



Names of studios and artists



Boutique



Athena's Garden

In addition, the team has studied similar models of cultural tourism and relevant placemaking projects including but not limited to the following:

- Gadsden Art Center in Quincy, Florida: <http://www.gadsdenarts.org>
- An urban farm in Tallahassee, Florida: <http://tenspeedgreens.com>



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- City-wide visioning project in Tallahassee, Florida: [www.imaginetallahassee.com](http://www.imaginetallahassee.com)
- various successful models completed under the Project for Public Spaces: [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org).

### **Identification of key stakeholders**

Per Section B item 1 of the contract, in order to foster collaborations with government, civic, economic, tourism, art, and history groups, the team collected contact information to invite experts to the June 27 community meeting and to arrange focus group meetings for July 10, 2013. As of July 3, the team has arranged two focus group meetings with tourism and economic development officials and local artists and performers to gain an insight into how the community's vision can best be materialized. These and future focus groups that the team intends to organize will enable the fulfillment of Section B item 6, to identify opportunities to grow a creative and sustainable economy in the Glenwood community.

### **Development of public participation tools**

Per Section A item 1 of the contract, the team developed a public participation plan for the duration of the project including future community meetings and identified all of the tools to be employed to gather community input and disseminate project information (Appendix A). This plan was shared with the DTNCRA staff on June 14, 2013. The DAS team developed the project website with embedded forms for public input. The website went live on June 15, 2013.

The team has also created a Facebook page to generate input and discussion on social media and is soliciting public participation by posting similar projects implemented in other cities and asking for input.

The project website can be found by following this link:

<https://sites.google.com/site/pcculturalheritagedistrict/>

The Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Panama-City-CRA-Cultural-Heritage-Tourism-District-Project/534065793321635>



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**Phase 2: Community Outreach (June 25- July 30)**

| Activity  | Action taken  |
|---|---|
| <b>Community Meeting</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Held first community meeting attended by approximately 200 residents and property owners (June 27,2013)</li> <li>• Presented findings and results to DTNCRA staff (June 29, 2013 – approved July 17, 2013)</li> <li>• Updated online forums with results (July 18)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Focus groups with key stakeholders</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with economic development and tourism development officials (July 10, 2013)</li> <li>• Meeting with local artists (July 10, 2013)</li> <li>• Meeting with Downtown North and Glenwood Design Committee (July 15, 2013)</li> <li>• Meeting with Board of African American Cultural Center (July 18, 2013)</li> <li>• Meeting with Historical Society, notable residents and property owners with historical information (scheduled, August 5, 2013)</li> <li>• Meeting with Glenwood Working Partnership (scheduled, August 6, 2013)</li> <li>• Meeting with STARS student group (in communication with Ms. Cherry, proposed date within July)</li> <li>• Meeting with Family of God Baptist Church (in communication with Ms. Craig regarding scheduling)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Other research</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visited District area for research on physical assets and took photographs (July 17, 2013)</li> <li>• Studied various cultural district case studies including those provided by the CRA (received July 16)</li> <li>• On-going study of cultural and historic districts around the world</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Development of preliminary recommendations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-going work on developing recommendations, some recommendations presented on July 18, 2013</li> </ul>  |



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### **Community meeting**

In partial fulfillment of Section A part 1 of the contract, the DAS team with the help of DTNCRA staff held the first community meeting for the property owners and residents of the District. The team mailed out flyers, invited Panama City and Panama City Beach officials, community groups, 16 local churches, and several local businesses and artists to the meeting.

The meeting was held on June 27, 2013 at the A.D Harris Learning Village Cafeteria at 6 p.m. Approximately 200 individuals attended the meeting out of which 78 filled the sign-in sheet. Mr. Eugene Franklin, President of the Florida Black Chamber of Commerce, was invited as the guest speaker for the event per Section A part 1 of the contract. The event began with opening remarks from Ms. Shamplain of DTNCRA. Mr. Eugene Franklin gave a presentation on the cultural model of developing a Cultural Heritage Tourism District based on the Belmont De Villiers Historic District in Pensacola, Florida. After the presentation, the DAS team conducted two activities with the community to solicit their input on the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities present in the District.

#### *Sticky note activity*

Participants were asked to write two specific answers on sticky notes in the first exercise. They were asked to write the top asset of the community along with the thing they disliked the most or felt would be a hindrance to the cultural heritage tourism concept. Participants' responses were collected and categorized as pertaining to the built environment, the local economy, local social life, local cultural factors, and educational factors. The input was then organized into broad categories to conceptualize the strengths and weaknesses identified by the community.

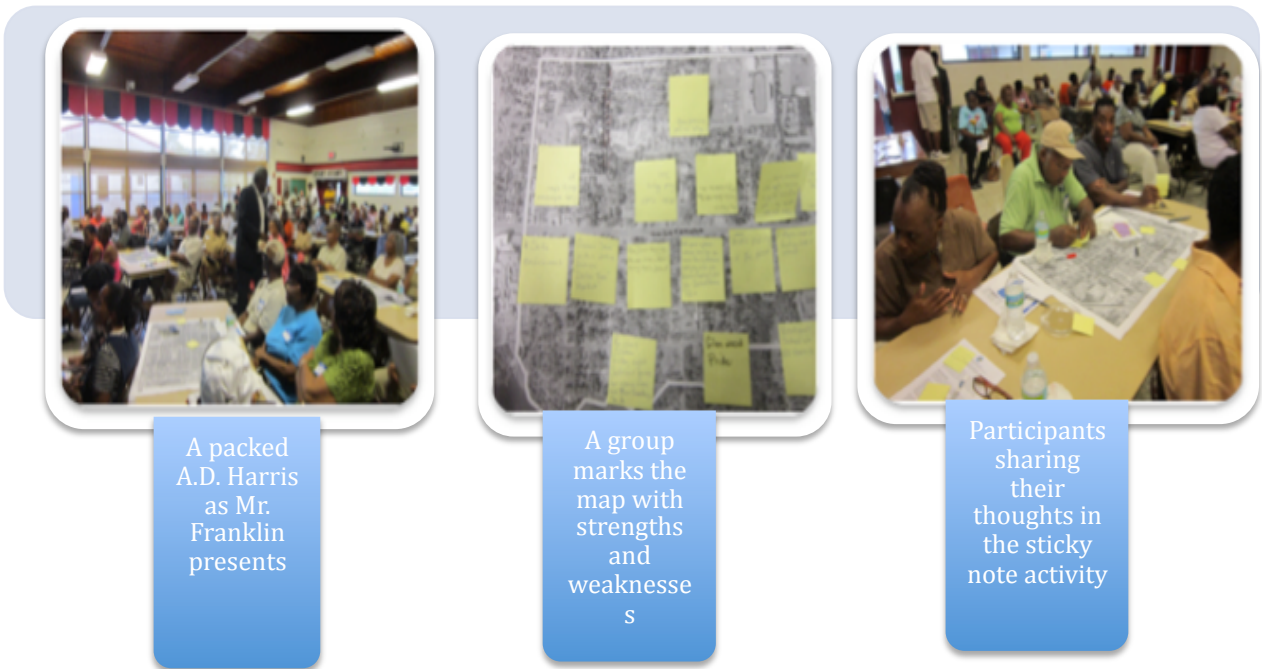
#### *Map marking activity*

In the second exercise, participants were asked to mark aerial maps of the district with community assets and opportunities as well as anything that was seen as a problem for the future implementation of the cultural heritage tourism concept. The markings on all maps were combined into a master map.

Following the meeting, the team tabulated results from the meeting and shared them with DTNCRA on June 29, 2013. After a few requested changes by the DTNCRA, the input was approved for sharing with the community and was uploaded to the project website on July 18, 2013. The results from the meeting are attached as Appendix A.

Some photographs from the community meeting are shown below:





A packed A.D. Harris as Mr. Franklin presents

A group marks the map with strengths and weaknesses

Participants sharing their thoughts in the sticky note activity

**Focus group meetings with key stakeholders**

In order to garner deeper and more insightful inputs from the community, to establish relationships with key stakeholders and important citizen groups, and as efforts to fulfill Section B part 1 of the contract, the DAS team has organized several focus group meetings. The meetings that have already been conducted are listed as follows:

1. Economic and Tourism Development officials
2. Artists
3. Downtown North and Glenwood Design Committee
4. Africa-American Cultural Center Board Members

The details of each focus group and their findings are included in Appendix B. Further focus groups to be conducted in the near future are as follows:

5. Historical Society, Pastors of district churches, Phi Delta Kappa, Gents' Group, local historians, notable residents and property owners with historical information (scheduled for August 5, 2013 at 6 p.m. at the Glenwood Community Center)
6. Glenwood Working Partnership citizens' group (scheduled for August 6, 2013 at 6 p.m. at the Glenwood Community Center)



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Per Section B of the contract, efforts are underway to conduct brainstorming sessions with school, high school, and college-age students of the district area to capture the vision of the youth and young adults of the District. The details of these efforts are as follows:

7. The DAS team is coordinating with Ms. Lynn Cherry regarding meeting with the Bay High School group of STARS students. As the STARS group will break for summer at the beginning of August, the meeting is slated for the last week of July.
8. The team is in communication with Ms. Angela Craig at Family of God Baptist Church Youth Wing regarding meeting during a Wednesday meeting session of the youth contingent. The meeting is going to be scheduled for the second week of August.
9. The team is communication with Ms. Shelley Clark at Bay County NAACP. Meeting is yet to been scheduled.

Some photographs from the focus groups are included below:



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The DAS team explains the Cultural Tourism Heritage District concept to the Artists' group



Groups of artists in discussion



The DAS team presenting their ideas to the Downtown North and Glenwood Design Committee



The Design Committee shares their thoughts in a brain storming session



The DAS team showing community input on a map to African-American Culture Center Board members



Q&A session at African-American Cultural Center focus group



### **Preliminary Recommendations**

Based on the community input received so far, the DAS team is working on developing recommendations for the final deliverable Feasibility Study, Master Implementation Plan, and Replicable Community Model. Although premature to label any given scenario as fully developed, one of the scenarios that the team is considering is outlined below to showcase the direction of the team. The final elements of each scenario presented to the community at the second public meeting will depend upon land use practicalities, funding opportunities, and sustainability. Any of the following elements may also be eliminated from the final recommendations in case they are deemed unfeasible.

1. Establish a District core near the A.D. Harris Learning Village and the intersection of MLK, Jr. Blvd and 11<sup>th</sup> St.
2. Redevelop A.D. Harris Learning Village as a cultural center and venue for the arts. This would entail moving social services out of the building and creating a space for music, art and history with ancillary development along the intersection of MLK Jr. Boulevard and 11<sup>th</sup> St.
3. Propose land use changes and develop a Cultural District Overlay to change the regulatory framework for the District core in order to:
  - a. Make it easier for small businesses to start up
  - b. Create place-based guidelines for building set backs, parking lot sizes etc.
  - c. Ensure that desirable land uses such as live/work spaces are permitted.
4. Find a site around the District core for a large open space park that could incorporate children's play spaces as well as art such as a splash pad that uses sculpture to move the water. This development would entail creating a separation between the recreational space and social services.
5. Develop and improve bike/pedestrian multi use paths that link Downtown Panama City, St. Andrews, and Bay Medical Center to the District. At present, a bike/pedestrian path along 11<sup>th</sup> Street connects St. Andrews with the area at the intersection of MLK, Jr. Boulevard and the A.D Harris Learning Village and can be improved for this scenario.
6. The bike/pedestrian paths can be made more visually appealing by creating murals or other artistic decoration along the streets.
7. Commission a fountain or sculpture in the retention pond at the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> St. and MLK, Jr. Boulevard to make it aesthetically pleasing and to incorporate art in the surroundings.
8. Develop display spaces across from A.D Harris Learning Village for artists to showcase and sell their work.



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9. Promote an urban farm in the district that can be linked to a farmers market and local restaurants. An urban farm can also be a potential venue to showcase agricultural history.
10. Develop a cultural heritage trail with markers
11. Utilize pockets of vacant land along MLK to develop retail spaces and a linear park
12. Move northern gateway to the District to include Highway 231. Establish and distinguish gateways into the District. Also develop smaller gateways into residential communities along MLK, Jr. Boulevard.
13. Promote retail, grocery store, and restaurants – cultural cuisine. The waterfront along the bayou can be utilized for dining establishments.
14. Develop an “Art in the Alley” Arts and crafts festival in the interconnected alleys around A.D Harris Learning Village. This festival may be within walking distance of the A.D Harris parking facility and will develop a positive use of alleys, removing negative connotations of activities that occur in alleys.
15. Develop other activities and festivals around Black History Month and further strengthen existing festivals such as the Gumbo Git down and BBQ

The team is continuing to study the feasibility of other scenarios. One scenario proposes to develop the District core around the African-American Cultural Center and utilizes the vacant lots around the Cultural Center, MLK Jr, Boulevard and 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Another scenario will explore developing the area around Glenwood Community Center and the Wilson’s Barber Shop. The team is also exploring the possibility of developing a connection between the District and Bay Medical Center to develop a health trail and patient-artist relationships.

### **Other research**

The DAS team is continuing to research other existing Cultural Heritage Tourism Districts and similar developments. These include but are not limited to:

- Indianapolis Cultural Trail, Indiana ([www.indyculturaltrail.org](http://www.indyculturaltrail.org))
- Falls Church Arts and Culture District, Virginia ([www.tinnerhill.org](http://www.tinnerhill.org)) (Received by DTNCRA staff on July 16, 2013)
- The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative, Pittsburgh, PA ([www.pennavenuearts.org](http://www.pennavenuearts.org))
- Delray Beach Cultural Loop and History Trail, Florida ([www.delrayconnect.com](http://www.delrayconnect.com))
- Broward County Creative Vision 2020 ([www.broward.org](http://www.broward.org)) (Received by DTNCRA staff on July 16, 2013)



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The team has also visited the District and taken account of physical assets. Two of these visits occurred on June 27, 2013 along Mr. Eugene Franklin and Ms. Sonja Evans, and on July 17, 2013. Some photographs taken on these visits are included in Appendix C.

### **Conclusion**

At the conclusion of the first quarter of the project, the DAS team has made significant progress in terms of data collection, disseminating information, establishing relationships with stakeholders, and developing preliminary recommendations. The team intends to continue developing high quality recommendation as it gears up for the second community meeting on August 29, 2013.