

2016 JMGBL Awards Application

Submission Date	2016-06-24 12:54:23
This application is for:	J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award
Project Title	McCormick County: The Natural Pace of Life
County/Counties	McCormick County
Staff Contact	Thessa G. Smith
Job Title	Economic Development Director
E-mail Address	tsmith@mccormickcountysc.org
Phone Number	864-852-2231
Please provide a summary of your entry (no more than 100 words) to be used in a handout for the awards competition and included in press releases/publications. You may either type the summary in the text box or upload it as an attachment below.	McCormick County is a rural county in South Carolina with a population of 10,233 citizen. Approximately 90 percent of our land is designed as forestry and restricted. Additionally, there are limited industries due to a lack of natural gas and minimal availability of water and sewer throughout the county. Therefore, it was determined that McCormick County needed a face lift to spark new energies. A strategic plan was conducted with the county's stakeholders; the next step was to develop a new branding image that would create unification throughout the entire community.
Presentations may include more than one speaker; however, each speaker should be aware that the 10-minute time limit is strictly enforced. Please list the name, title, and e-mail address of each speaker:	Thessa G. Smith - Economic Development Director - tsmith@mccormickcountysc.org Shawn Terpack - Consultant -shawn@annettmuldrow.com
Will any of the speakers need accommodations (wheelchair accessibility, etc.) during the awards competition?	No



McCormick
COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

McCormick County, South Carolina:
The Natural Pace of Life

Fast Pace Growth

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Brand Statement

Among the pines of the Sumter National Forest, nestled along South Carolina's Freshwater Coast, there is a place where the coastline of Lake Thurmond welcomes people into our proud state, where opportunities abound around every corner, and where the pace of life makes it easy to connect with nature and even easier to connect with one another. McCormick County, established 100 years ago, is the place we are proud to call it our home.

We are a diverse collection of communities connected by an historic rail line that winds its way through our county. The railroad tells the tale of our early years and our connections to the region that surrounds us and fuelled our growth. The rail now helps us grow in new and different ways, with the Savannah Valley Rail Trail connecting the Railtowns of McCormick County, Mt. Carmel, Willington, Plum Branch, Parksville, Modoc, Clarks Hill and McCormick, communities with names that evoke the people who inspired the history of this place. We are also newer communities such as Savannah Lakes Village, where old families and newcomers alike enjoy a lifestyle on the lakefront that defines us. We are a safe and comfortable community in which to raise a family and enjoy life.

We are a place where you can savor your surroundings, where a connection to the natural world is as close as your front door and a traffic jam means a family of white tailed deer. We are home to beautiful state parks packed with campsites, golf courses, boat launches, hiking and biking trails, and miles of stunning coastline. Our approachability, ease of access and welcoming nature help us put the "great" in "the great outdoors."

Today, we are building a 21st century economy around industry, the arts, culture, recreation and tourism. We are preserving our natural and cultural resources for our children and grandchildren, and are working together to preserve treasures such as Willington, the Dorn Mill and Price's Mill. We are a vibrant arts community that is nurturing artists of all ages and interests, and hosting events to cultivate community pride.

We are a place where the pace is slower, the tea is sweeter, the trees are taller and the gold shines brighter. We invite you to discover why people call us the Gem of South Carolina's Freshwater Coast.

McCormick County, South Carolina: *The Natural Pace of Life.*

Benefit/Importance of Project

1. Why was this project undertaken?

The purpose of this effort was to create a consistent image package for the community and its partners to use to continue to build local pride, recruit investment to the community and market McCormick County to visitors. **Additionally, the undertaking of this project was threefold:**

- 1) Define who we are;
- 2) Depict where we are; and
- 3) Determine how great we are.

The branding initiative began on Tuesday, January 12, 2016, with a series of roundtable meetings with various stakeholder groups. That evening, the public was invited to share their thoughts on the marketing image for McCormick County. The project team then spent the following two days in roundtable discussions and working on design concepts that were presented to the public on Thursday, January 14, 2016, at a public meeting. Following the community meeting, the new branding strategies were placed on the county's website and citizens were invited to comment. The comments were overwhelmingly positive! The consultants monitored the process along with the economic director. The final product was delivered within four weeks of our start date and in time for our Centennial Celebration, **McCormick County: The Natural Pace of Life ~ 100 Years of Progress.**

2. What is the significance of this project to your community as a whole? How does it relate in importance to the other problems in your community?

McCormick County is a rural county in South Carolina with a population of 10,233 citizens. Approximately 90 percent of our land is designated as forestry and restricted. Additionally, there are limited industries due to a lack of natural gas and minimal availability of water and sewer throughout the county. Therefore, it was determined that McCormick County needed a face lift to spark new energies. A strategic plan was conducted with the county's stakeholders; the next step was to develop a new branding image that would create unification throughout the entire community.



Former Look

3. How much of the county's population is benefited by the project? In what specific ways are different groups of citizens within the county better off than before?

The entire community of McCormick County has been impacted by this project. The purpose of this effort was to create a consistent image package for the community and its partners to use to continue to build local pride, recruit investment to the community and market McCormick County to visitors.

The project allowed citizens and stakeholders the opportunity to provide suggestions and/or comments about the new branding/marketing strategies. The comments gave us the opportunity to incorporate community ideas and suggestions, such as including a special logo for the railtowns of Mt. Carmel, Willington, Plum Branch, Parksville, Modoc, Clarks Hill and McCormick, as well as the Chamber, MACK and The Visitors Council. (See page C.)

4. What degree of success did the project attain? What major objectives were achieved?

The process has been very successful. The community provided positive feedback and support for our new marketing initiative. Pre-existing barriers have been identified and dealt with, bringing citizens and organizations together so that we are now in a better position to hurdle most obstacles. Better collaboration has emerged and the economic outlook for the county has improved tremendously. The Town of McCormick is currently working on a streetscape plan to enhance downtown, incorporating the new logo and color scheme.

Project Effort/Difficulty

1. What did your county have to do to accomplish its objectives?

The initiative began on Tuesday with a public meeting. The public was invited to share their thoughts on the marketing image for McCormick County. One of the greatest challenges was to initiate a team concept. The project team then spent the following two days in a series of roundtable discussions with various stakeholder groups, working on design concepts that were presented on Thursday evening at a public meeting. Listed below are invited stakeholders and some of the questions/discussions presented:

Economic Development Roundtable

Invitees: Representatives from the economic development community in McCormick County.

The purpose of this meeting was to speak with economic development professionals, property owners, developers, realtors and other investors to determine their interest in investing in McCormick County. These individuals might have already invested, have considered investing or not yet expressed interest in the county. We discussed the following topics:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the McCormick County market?
- What kinds of projects and marketing efforts are proving most successful in the area?
- What is being considered in McCormick County and what can be done to encourage economic development?

Arts, Culture, and Tourism Roundtable

Invitees: Anyone related to tourism, Chamber/business groups, attraction managers (museums, historic sites, etc.), event managers and groups, hotel and restaurant representatives, and others with a vested interest in tourism in McCormick County.

We discussed the following topics:

- How is McCormick County marketed now? Historically?
- What are the tourism themes and attractions in the area, and how do downtown McCormick and the lake factor in?
- What are the patterns and trends you are seeing locally and regionally with regard to visitors?

Business Roundtable

Invitees: Representative merchants and commercial establishment owners.

The purpose of the meeting was to understand the market from business owners' perspectives, and to identify opportunities for creating and implementing marketing and branding tools for this stakeholder group. We discussed the following topics:

- How and to whom are you marketing?
- What organizations, events and opportunities exist for marketing and branding services?
- What potential new markets are you seeing and how do you expect to tap into them?

Young Professionals Roundtable

Invitees: High school students and young professionals (under 30 or 40) who work or reside in McCormick County.

We discussed the following topics:

- What do young people do in the community?
- What types of activities do young adults enjoy? Where do they go to enjoy them?
- What activities attract them to the region now?
- What is their perception of the region and does the "inside" perception differ from the "outside" perception?

2. What challenges occurred during the project? Were there any community concerns?

The consultants had to travel throughout the county in order to understand and gather as much information as possible for the new brand. They were able to use County GIS and maps to locate property and special districts. The county website was instrumental in formatting and reviewing our current brand, and provided a platform to expand our identity.



1916-2016
100 Years of Progress

100 Years
Promotion

3. What were the nature and extent of the county government's efforts to alleviate the problem(s)? How difficult was it to accomplish the project's goals and/or objectives?

Following the community meeting, the new branding strategies were placed on the county's website and citizens were invited to comment. The comments were overwhelmingly positive! The consultants monitored the process alongside the economic director. The final product was delivered within four weeks of our start date and in time for our Centennial Celebration, **McCormick County: The Natural Pace of Life ~ 100 Years of Progress**. In addition, the final product has proven that team efforts are very productive and beneficial to all entities throughout the county.

4. Was financing the project an obstacle? Were there any unusual factors inherent in financing the project?

The financing of this project was not an obstacle. In fact, we received funding from many of the stakeholders to assist with financing the project (Savannah Lakes Village Property Owners Association, the Chamber, MACK, The Visitors Council, the Town of McCormick and WCTEL).

5. Did any agencies, citizen groups, or other organizations assist your county with this project? Did their participation pose any particular challenges or offer any unique contributions or benefits?

We received assistance from the entire county including private, public, school and church entities in addition to many vendors, both local and outside of the county, who participated in the roundtable discussions. (Savannah Lakes Village Property Owners Association, the Chamber, MACK, The Visitors Council, the Town of McCormick and WCTEL). The input was very beneficial to the county and assisted in obtaining financing for this project.

6. Are there any unresolved problems or other goals left to tackle?

Currently we are working on implementing the new logo throughout the county. Advertisements are being changed in visitor's centers and we are creating new magazine advertisements. Centennial banners with our new logo are displayed throughout the county. We are implementing the changes on our county buildings and vehicles. Additionally, we are also working on funding to complete new county entrance signs and billboards. (See page E.)

Project Originality/Innovation

1. Justify the uniqueness of this project. What makes it different from other projects designed to achieve the same objective?

This project was unique in the fact that the entire community and stakeholders became engaged. Additionally, it marked our Centennial Celebration, and the entire county has become alive and resurrected. We are seeing shop owners cleaning and adding a fresh coat of paint to enhance their buildings. New shops are opening downtown and we have an increased interest in small business and entrepreneurship.

2. Do you know of any other similar programs in South Carolina? If so, how is your program different?

Our county has incorporated our new marketing along with our Centennial Celebration in a program that is intended to last an entire year. Having a constant reminder and promotion has assisted us in recapturing what makes McCormick County a great place to live – “The Natural Pace of Life.” (See page D.)



New Look

3. What innovations were required in accomplishing your objectives?

The task was to have engaged participants on hand who would provide honest answers and helpful solutions. Meetings were scheduled during the day or, when necessary, after normal work hours to accommodate everyone’s schedule. Our consultants had to travel throughout the county in order to understand and gather as much information as possible for the new brand. They were able to use the County GIS and maps to locate property and special districts. The county website was instrumental in formatting and reviewing our current brand, and provided a platform to expand our identity.

4. Who provided the creativity and imagination in your project?

McCormick County had been working on a strategic plan. Part of the plan was to hire an economic director and develop a new Branding/Marketing Strategy for the county. Although the county had a great brand statement, “The Gem of the Freshwater Coast,” it was not inclusive and all stakeholders did not feel connected to this brand. With a new economic development director on staff and other changes in county leadership (new Chamber of Commerce Director) the next step was to re-establish relationships and begin a collaborative effort in our County. McCormick County hired Arnett Muldrow & Associates to conduct a branding and marketing initiative for the county. The purpose of this effort was to create a consistent image package for the community and its partners to continue to build local pride, recruit investment to the community, and market McCormick County to our investors and visitors. Our county has incorporated our new branding along with our Centennial Celebration to last an entire year. Having a constant reminder and promotion has assisted us in recapturing what makes McCormick County a great place to live – “The Natural Pace of Life.”



100 YEARS OF COMMUNITY



McCormick County celebrates its centennial

By DAMIAN DOMINGUEZ
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Generations of McCormick County's residence came out to the courthouse Friday to celebrate the county's centennial.

"It's a birthday party my kids would love to have — celebrating for the whole year," said Sen. Shane Massey, R-Edgefield.

But more than an anniversary of the county's formation, Massey said the centennial was a celebration of the people who made the past 100 years possible. He thanked county and town council for the work they've done, as well as the other elected and appointed officials in the county.

Sen. Floyd Nicholson, D-Greenwood, Rep. Anne Parks, D-Greenwood, Mayor Roy Smith, former Mayor John Robert McMillan and others spoke their praise for the county, and commended the more than 100 county residents in attendance for their dedication to forming a strong community. Their voices were sporadically drowned out by the blare of a train horn.

"Don't knock that train," said historian Bobby Edmunds when he approached the lectern to speak. "Without that railroad, we wouldn't be here."

DAMIAN DOMINGUEZ | INDEX JOURNAL

McCormick County and town officials, along with more than 100 residents, gathered Friday outside the courthouse to celebrate the county's centennial anniversary.

See CENTENNIAL, page 3A

Announcement



-HISTORIC-
Clarks Hill
SOUTH CAROLINA

-HISTORIC-
McCormick
SOUTH CAROLINA

-HISTORIC-
Modoc
SOUTH CAROLINA

-HISTORIC-
Mt. Carmel
SOUTH CAROLINA

-HISTORIC-
Parksville
SOUTH CAROLINA

-HISTORIC-
Plum Branch
SOUTH CAROLINA

-HISTORIC-
Willington
SOUTH CAROLINA

Our Towns



McCormick
COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

McCormick
ECO-INDUSTRIAL PARK

McCormick
County
VISITORS COUNCIL

Our Team

McCORMICK COUNTY
Chamber
OF COMMERCE

MACK
McCormick Arts Council
at the Keturah

Railtowns
of
McCormick





2016 Centennial Events

Friday, February 19	Centennial Celebration—County Courthouse
Saturday, April 9	Bells & Whistles 29835 Art Appreciation Centennial Celebration Youth Art: 100 Years of History Dorn Mill Complex: Sit a Spell Tea
Tuesday, April 19	McCormick County Council Meeting Hosted by Girl Scouts
Sunday, May 15	Ministerial Alliance—Celebration of Church
Sunday, June 19	County wide Worship
Saturday, July 2	Patriotic Centennial Celebration Weekend Hosted by Plum Branch Yacht Club
Monday, July 4	Patriotic Centennial Boat Parade Hosted by Lake Thurmond Power Squadron Beach Party, food and festivities
Saturday, July 9	100 Years of History Hosted by Willington on the Way African American heritage, reenactments, gospel and quilt expo in our Book Town
Tuesday, July 19	County Council Meeting at Clarks Hill
Friday, August 19	Endless Summer Centennial Concert in Historic Downtown McCormick
Saturday, Sept. 17	Gold Rush Festival: Centennial Celebration
Wednesday, Oct 19	Plum Branch Event hosted by Pine Grove AME Church (Season Steppers)
Saturday, Nov. 19	McCormick County Centennial Banquet At the McCormick Middle School Complex
Tuesday, Dec. 20	County Council Meeting and Holiday Open House

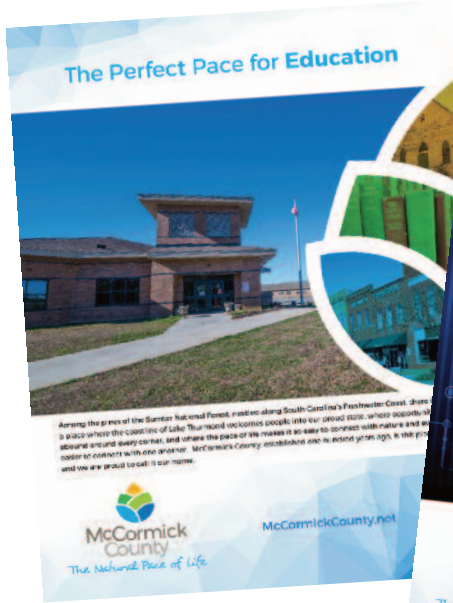


Supported by the McCormick County Chamber of Commerce

Event Schedule



McCormick County
The Natural Pace of Life



Ads



Billboards



Website

www.mccormickcountysc.org

Thessa Smith, M.S.M.
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McCormick County

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