

# Environmental Systems Enhancement Plan for the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee



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Regional Economic Development Center

Prepared for:  
**Mississippi River  
Corridor-Tennessee, Inc.**

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Steve Redding, Director  
Regional Economic Development Center  
Graduate Program in City & Regional Planning  
School of Urban Affairs & Public Policy  
The University of Memphis  
208 McCord Hall  
Memphis, Tennessee 38152

Tel. 901.678.2056

Fax 901.678.4162

e-mail: [tredding@memphis.edu](mailto:tredding@memphis.edu)

[www.memphis.edu/planning/redc.htm](http://www.memphis.edu/planning/redc.htm)

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# **Environmental Systems Enhancement Plan for the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee**

Prepared for  
Mississippi River Corridor-Tennessee, Inc.  
Diana Threadgill, Executive Director  
John Sheahan, Chairman

Steve Redding  
Gene Pearson  
Charles A. Santo  
Nathan Ferguson

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this plan is to present recommendations for a network of public and private facilities and sites to enhance the attractions along the Mississippi River in six Tennessee counties – Obion, Lake, Dyer, Lauderdale, Tipton, and Shelby. Attractions include museums and parks, conservation areas and natural landforms, historic buildings and sites, scenic sites, and other recreation areas. The aim is to strengthen amenities, improve the overall quality of life in the six counties, and more closely connect the Mississippi River to the people of the region and the world.

The plan views the six counties as a unified destination identified as the Mississippi River Corridor for regional and national visitors to experience the Mississippi River environment through eco-tourism, recreational tourism, cultural heritage tourism and agri-tourism. The plan recommends corridor attraction themes, corridor River Centers, and connectivity enhancements to guide visitors through the corridor. The plan also includes an assessment of potential visitors who will benefit from experiencing the corridor as well as possible ways to implement the recommendations.

The Mississippi River is one of the most powerful hydrologic formations in the world. It drains parts or all of 31 states and two Canadian provinces, an area of 1.25 million square miles. The drainage basin extends from New York to Montana and from Minnesota to Louisiana. More than 250 tributaries drain into the Mississippi, including the Ohio and Missouri rivers.



### General Description of Study Area

The six-county study area is part of the lower Mississippi River valley that extends from Cairo, Illinois to the mouth of the river below New Orleans. The six counties are located along the Mississippi River in west Tennessee. Five of the counties touch the river and the sixth county, Obion, while not touching the river, overlays a significant portion of the immediate river environment at Reelfoot Lake and the river's bluffs. Map I-1, which follows, shows the corridor in relation to the Mississippi River drainage system; and Map I-2 shows a base map upon which analyses and recommendations will be overlaid throughout this report.

**Figure I-1 Mississippi River Drainage Basin**

The six counties as shown on Map I-2 contain a number of municipalities and transportation routes that connect both rural and urban communities throughout the corridor. There are 25 municipalities that contain the bulk of population and businesses in the corridor. Most of these municipalities are located along U. S. highway 51, which will soon parallel the so-called NAFTA highway - Interstate 69, which will connect Canada and Mexico

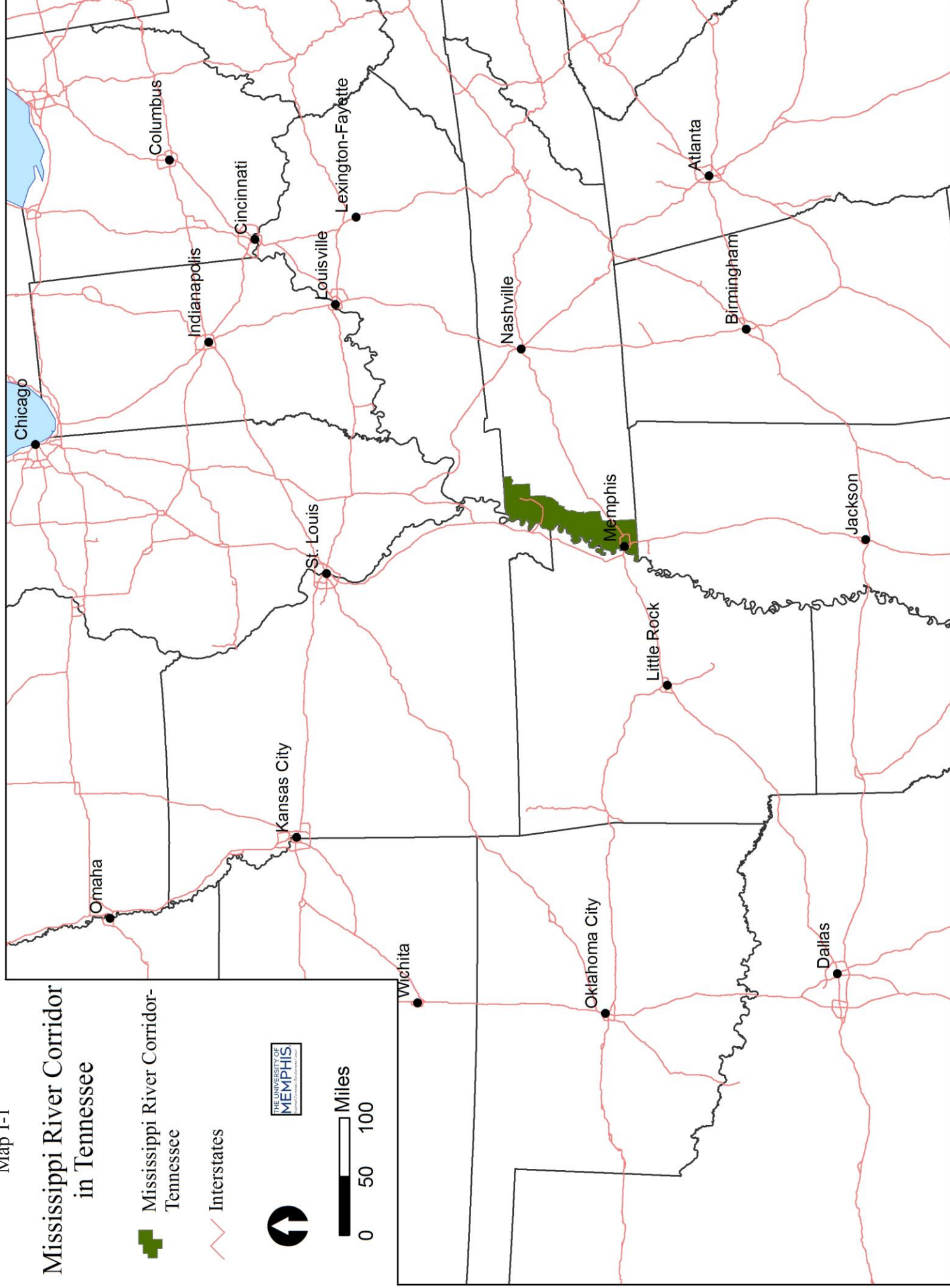
# Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee

 Mississippi River Corridor-  
Tennessee

 Interstates



 Miles  
0 50 100



Shelby County contains the largest municipality – Memphis - located on the bluff at the river’s edge with docking facilities. Shelby also has five municipalities located along radial arterials extending to the east of Memphis.

Most of the other municipalities north of Memphis are located on the original Illinois Central Railroad line that extends from Chicago to New Orleans. The railroad and U.S. 51 helped spur growth of these towns and cities, which originally served as trade centers for agricultural and wildlife products from the bottomlands of the Mississippi River. These municipalities in the northern corridor counties are located in the upland areas close to natural bluffs that overlook the river flood plain except where the bluffs are at the water’s edge in Lauderdale, Tipton and Shelby counties (Chickasaw Bluffs Nos. 1, 2, 3 & 4).

The study area for this plan also contains parks, wildlife management areas, lakes and streams that are part of the Mississippi River’s natural and man-made history. These are also shown on Map I-2 and will be discussed as part of the corridor’s assets in the next chapter.

### **Context for Plan**

This plan has been prepared for the Mississippi River Corridor-Tennessee, Inc. (MRCT) with support from the McKnight Foundation of Minnesota.

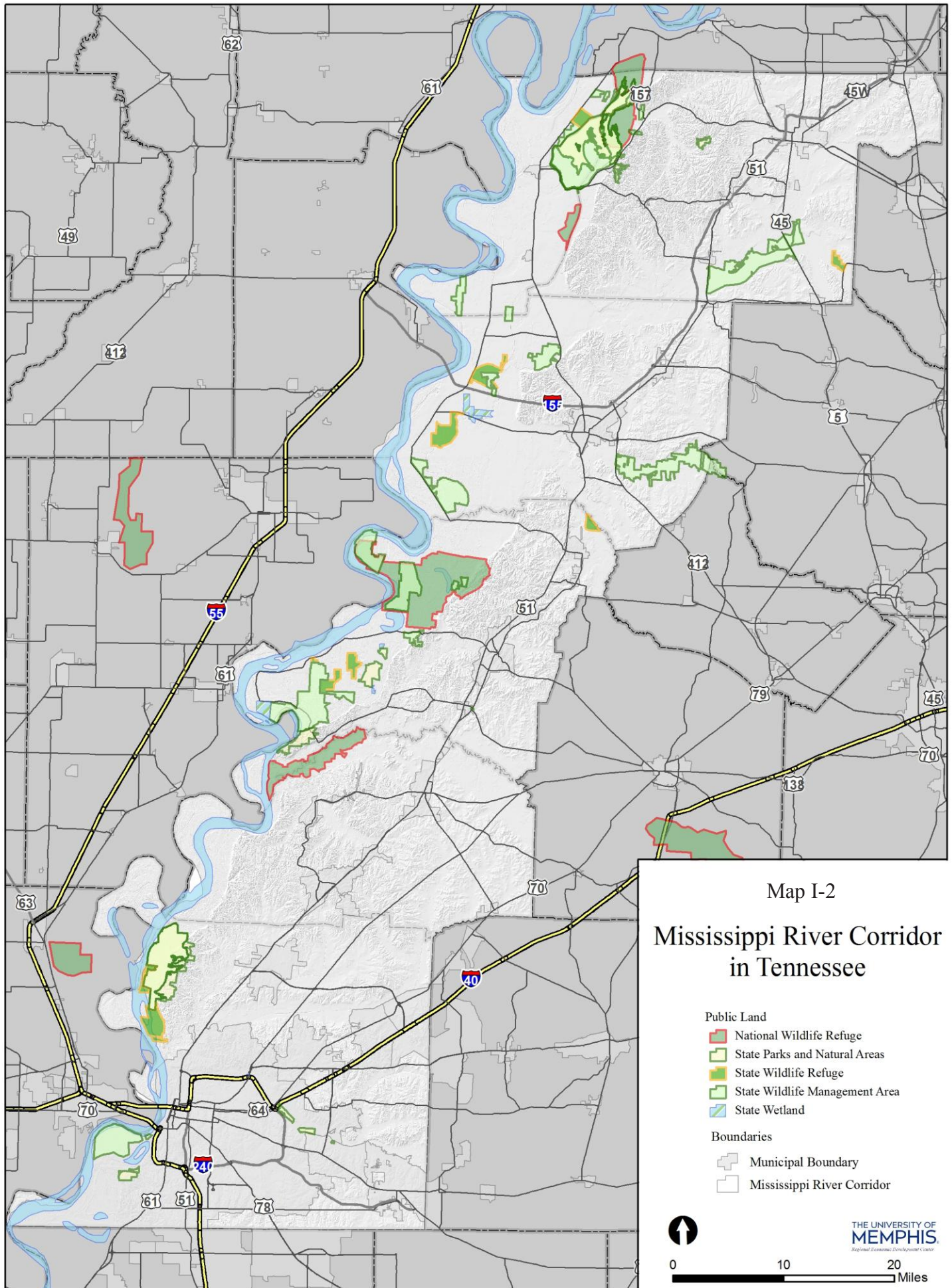
MRCT This organization has its roots as a project of the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation (TPGF) who advanced the idea of a scenic, natural and cultural heritage corridor for the six Mississippi River counties in West Tennessee. In 2001 a Steering Committee was established to plan corridor improvements and marketing and seek funding support. The project received backing and help from the Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce who had made a commitment to regional development outside of Memphis.

In 2005 the project entered into a mutual support partnership with the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area operated by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University. The Center had previously identified the six-county corridor as one of seven primary heritage corridors in the state. Also in 2005, with funds from the McKnight Foundation, a project director was hired to create marketing products and make grant requests and provide overall staff support to the Steering Committee and volunteer committees in each of the six counties.

In the fall of 2006 a “Conceptual Master Plan” was produced that outlined amenities in the corridor for the following: land conservation; transportation and infrastructure; recreation; historical and cultural attractions; health and wellness; education and research; and economic development. The plan also identified strategic goals and objectives for the Mississippi River Corridor project. Each county had a MRCT task force, which provided the basic knowledge of assets and the direction of the plan.

In April 2007 the Mississippi River Corridor - Tennessee, Inc. was established as a general welfare non-profit corporation in Tennessee; and in August 2007 the Internal Revenue Service granted MRC-T Inc. status as a charitable 501 (C) (3) corporation.





The most recent plan is the “Mississippi River Corridor Tennessee Strategic Plan” produced in the fall of 2008. The strategic plan identified that the primary function of MRCT is to cover three focus areas: asset development; economic development; and community development.

**This enhancement plan is a step toward fulfilling the mission of MRCT and is an extension of the “Conceptual Master Plan” and “Strategic Plan”.**

Great River Road. One of the key features of Tennessee’s Mississippi River Corridor will be the Great River Road (GRR), the national scenic and historic highway that stretches from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. This road will be 75 years old in 2013 and is the responsibility of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, which was created by the 10 states that border the Mississippi River. The GRR has segments on both sides of the river to form a continuous roadway over its entire length. However, some segments do not have the designation as a National Scenic Byway. For example, Tennessee, Missouri, Kentucky, and Louisiana were not recognized in 2008. A short history of the Great River Road is presented below.

In 1936 Congress authorized the Secretary of the Interior to cooperate with various states in the preparation of a nationwide parkway and recreation plan. With interest shown by several Mississippi River states, the Secretary encouraged all 10 states to organize; and, in 1938 the Mississippi River Parkway Planning Commission was formed by the governors of the 10 states.

Little progress was made in planning the Parkway as well as other national scenic routes due the onset of World War II; but in 1949 Congress funded a feasibility study over the entire length of the Mississippi River. As a result a two volume study titled “Parkway for the Mississippi” was completed by the Bureau of Public Roads and National Park Service in 1952.

The “Parkway for the Mississippi” reports concluded that a parkway on separate right of way was too expensive and that existing riverside roads could be designated as a scenic route with some upgrades and new construction to connect existing roads.

The Federal Highway Act of 1954 authorized planning funds for the Bureau of Public Roads to work with each of the 10 states to determine a Parkway route for each state. These studies and the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, which had evolved from the Planning Commission, adopted the familiar green and white pilot’s wheel that today marks segments of the Great River Road.



**Figure I-2 Great River Road Sign in Tennessee**

Tennessee’s portion of the Mississippi River Parkway was identified in 1958 in a study titled “The Great River Road Tennessee” prepared with funding from the 1954 Highway Act by the Bureau of Public Roads and National Park Service.

The 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act provided funds for improvements to the Great River Road, with the money allocated to states between 1973 and 1982. During this period the Bureau of Public Roads became the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), who issued guidelines for

setting criteria for the states to gain recognition for the GRR from FHWA. The states in turn set up procedures for selecting the GRR with their respective boundaries. The guidelines among other items called for “effective control and development and scenic easement acquisition.

Thus the GRR route has segments that conform to FHWA guidelines and other segments that are considered state routes only. Conforming routes received improvement funds in the 1980s.

The National Scenic Byways Program administered by FHWA, which replaced previous scenic road programs, was established in the early 1990s. By 1998 three segments of the Great River Road were designated as national scenic byways – one each in Minnesota, Illinois, and Arkansas. This made federal grants available for roadway improvements and construction of amenities such as scenic view areas, parking, lighting, restrooms, and interpretive signs.



**Figure I-3 National Scenic Byway Logo**

By 2008 Tennessee’s segment of the Great River Road had not been designated a national scenic byway; but in the early stages of preparing this plan. MRCT learned that FHWA would be accepting nominations for designation of Tennessee’s Great River Road as a national scenic highway.

Working with its Board, committees in each of the six counties, the University of Memphis’ Regional Economic Development Center and other consultants, MRCT submitted two required documents to FHWA – **“2008 National Scenic Byways Nomination” and “Great River Road Tennessee Corridor Management Plan”**. **The contents of these documents are considered a part of and contributory to the analysis and recommendations contained in this plan.**

Trails and Greenways. In addition to the Great River Road, Tennessee’s Mississippi River Corridor is the location of formal routes for bicyclists, greenbelts along Mississippi River tributaries, and a soon to be designated birding trail.

Two formal trails for bicycles have been identified in West Tennessee. The first is the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) established by the non-profit organization called the Mississippi River Trail, Inc. headquartered in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Distinctive route signs, approved by FHWA, can be seen along the trail in Tennessee’s river counties.



**Figure I-4 Route marker for cycling trail in corridor**

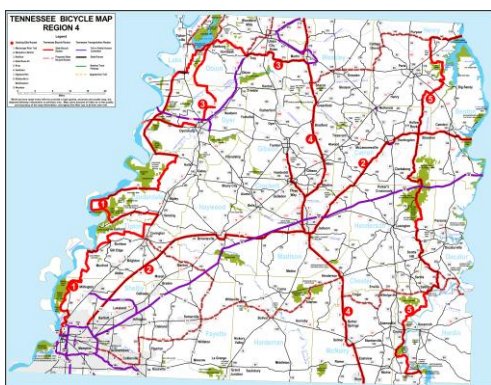
The MRT, Inc. has designated a bike trail the full length of the Mississippi River and has plans for expanding alternate routes in each state.

The other bike trail with similar routing has been designated by the Tennessee Department of Transportation as Tennessee’s Bike Trail. This trail system covers the entire state with formal routes identified in each grand region. The Mississippi River corridor has three segments – the Mississippi River Trail, the Memphis to Bristol Trail, and the Reelfoot Trail. Additional segments have been proposed. One would connect Covington in Tipton County with Collierville



and Germantown in Shelby County via Somerville in Fayette County. Short segments are planned to connect the Mississippi River Trail to the Mississippi River's edge opposite Dyersburg and the other to go fully around Reelfoot Lake.

Another trail being planned is the Great River Birding Trail of the Audubon Society. Parts of the birding trail have been identified in the upper Mississippi river area. Current planning is underway to select the trail from northern Tennessee to Vicksburg, Mississippi. Thus far 47 sites have been identified; and Tennessee has identified Important Birding Areas (IBA) in each of the six corridor counties that include the state parks and national and state wildlife refuges and management areas.



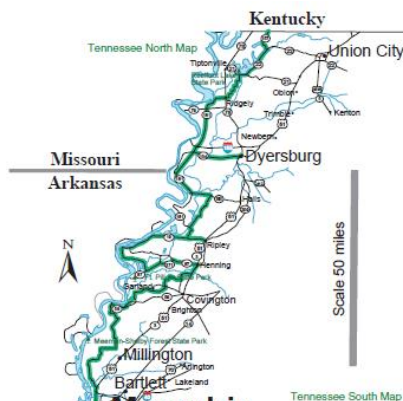
**Figure I-5 Tennessee's Bicycle Routes**

of habitats in each county: Lake – Reelfoot Complex; Dyer – Island No. 18, Island No. 20 and White Lake Refuge; Lauderdale – Chickasaw NWR, Lauderdale Refuge, Lower Hatchie NWR, and Nebraska Point Dikes; Tipton – Randolph Bar, and Lower Hatchie NWR; and Shelby – Densford Bar, Eagle Lake Refuge, Ensley Bottoms Complex, and Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park.

A formal greenway is being developed along the Wolf River in Shelby County. This Mississippi River tributary is the least human altered river in Shelby County and work is underway to restore the river and build a series of parks, shelters, boat ramps, and trails from Fayette County to the Mississippi River.

The Hatchie River is a scenic river that forms the Tipton-Lauderdale county line and has potential for greenway development. The Hatchie River was granted scenic river status by the Tennessee General Assembly as the longest of 13 river segments so designated in the State. This river, along with the Wolf River, also has the qualities to be formally designated “Blueways” with river markers for canoeists and kayakers and boat launch nodes with interpretive signs and maps.

In addition, the Obion and Forked Deer Rivers should be studied to locate potential greenbelt segments, like the North Fork Forked Deer River at Dyersburg. The North Fork of the river has a



**Figure I-6 Mississippi River Cycling Trail**

The Tennessee Important Bird Areas program is run by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA); and the entire alluvial valley within the Mississippi River Corridor has been designated as an IBA. In addition, the Tigrett Wildlife Management Area, The Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge and the Wolf River Wildlife Management Area have been designated.

The U.S. Geological Survey maintains bird lists for the five National Wildlife Refuges in the Corridor – Reelfoot, Lake Isom, Chickasaw, Lower Hatchie and Hatchie; and the TWRA has lists of birds for the network

meandering streambed without the unsightly and damaging habitat effects from channelization by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers under the West Tennessee Tributaries Project.

\*\*\*\*\*

The foregoing narrative provides background from which the elements of this enhancement plan have been shaped. The remaining chapters contain the recommendations for improvements within Tennessee's Mississippi River Corridor.



## **CHAPTER II      THEMES AND NODES**

### **Corridor Themes**

The Mississippi River Corridor in West Tennessee is home to unique natural and manmade features, a rich culture and heritage, and a history that speaks of slavery, war, and civil rights. Each of the six counties that comprise the Corridor possesses an identity that is uniquely theirs, though each is tied together by the presence of the Mississippi River. Through previous studies leaders and residents of the six counties have identified and compiled an extensive list of locations that when viewed together present a narrative of the past, insight into daily contemporary life, and a nod to where each may be travelling in the years to come. However, even though the counties have created the foundation that is necessary to tell their stories, no effort has been taken to tie these assets together into common themes.

The development of themes is essential to creating a unified identity throughout the Corridor that will provide travelers with a single coherent path through the Corridor while enabling each county to retain their unique identities. While many of the sites throughout the region are able to draw thousands of visitors on their own, by grouping them with sites that tell a different part of the same story, the reach will be greatly increased, ultimately benefitting the region as a whole.

The process of identifying themes relied upon previous plans, site visits to each asset under consideration, and the input and guidance of community members, civic leaders, and numerous organizations throughout the region. The development process, initiated by the MRCT's 2006 Conceptual Master Plan, worked with representatives from each of the six counties to identify sites of cultural, natural, or scenic importance. Themes are intended to draw individual assets together while simultaneously connecting visitors and residents to the Mississippi River. By following any one of the paths through each county, visitors will be able to immerse themselves in life on the River.

The following provides an overview of the primary themes that were identified during the course of this study along with a general discussion about the potential experience that a visitor might take away from their trip. The location and distribution of each asset by theme can be seen in Map II-1. The goal was to identify themes that enabled each county to make a contribution, though this wasn't possible for each theme. By evaluating the spatial distribution of assets according to themes, one is able to gain a better understanding of the strengths that exist in each county, laying the foundation for identifying the role that River Centers will play in river communities as will be discussed in the following section.



**Figure II-2 Reelfoot Lake State Park, Obion County**

Reconnecting with the River. The assets grouped in this theme are aimed at reconnecting individuals to the river, its tributaries, and ecosystems through recreational opportunities. Comprised primarily of local, state and federal lands, this theme represents one of the largest groupings with 43 sites consisting of over 140,000 acres. In their 2008 state recreation plan, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) recognized the Corridor as one of four corridors in the state with an abundance of recreational lands that have the potential of bringing much need economic relief to rural counties that are experiencing a decline in traditional industries.

The highest concentration of assets within

this theme is found in the northeast reaches of Lake County around Reelfoot Lake and around the central and southern area of Lauderdale County around the Chickasaw and Hatchie National Wildlife Refuges. Both Lake and Lauderdale County contain the highest concentration of publicly owned lands in the Corridor with 2.05 and 1.87 acres per capita respectively<sup>1</sup> and also some of the greatest number of significant birding sites.

In addition to publicly owned lands, *Reconnecting with the River* also contains a vast number of birding sites as well. The sites identified on Map II-2 were derived from the National Audubon Society's Great River Birding Trail and the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency's Important Birding Areas (IBA). In addition to the specific points identified on the map, TWRA has also designated the entire alluvial valley as an IBA. While a great number of birding sites are located within public lands, they are by no means the only locations that have been identified by TWRA and the National Audubon Society. In fact, the greatest number of birding sites (19) in the Corridor is found in Shelby County which also contains the fewest number of acres of public land per capita at 0.03.

Experiencing the River. While *Experiencing the River* and *Reconnecting with the River* may seem to be identical, the sites grouped in the former involve a more passive appreciation of the River and the multitude of landforms throughout the Corridor. Each of the assets in this category, provides the visitor with a visual experience of the Mississippi, the river valley, or the bluff. Overlooks range from boat landings that give visitors a close up and personal view, to spectacular



**Figure II-1 Tigrett Wildlife Management Area, Dyer County**



**Figure II-3 Randolph Bluff Overlook, Tipton County**

<sup>1</sup> Tennessee Department of Environment and Recreation (2008). The Tennessee State Recreation Plan 2003-2008. Nashville, TN.



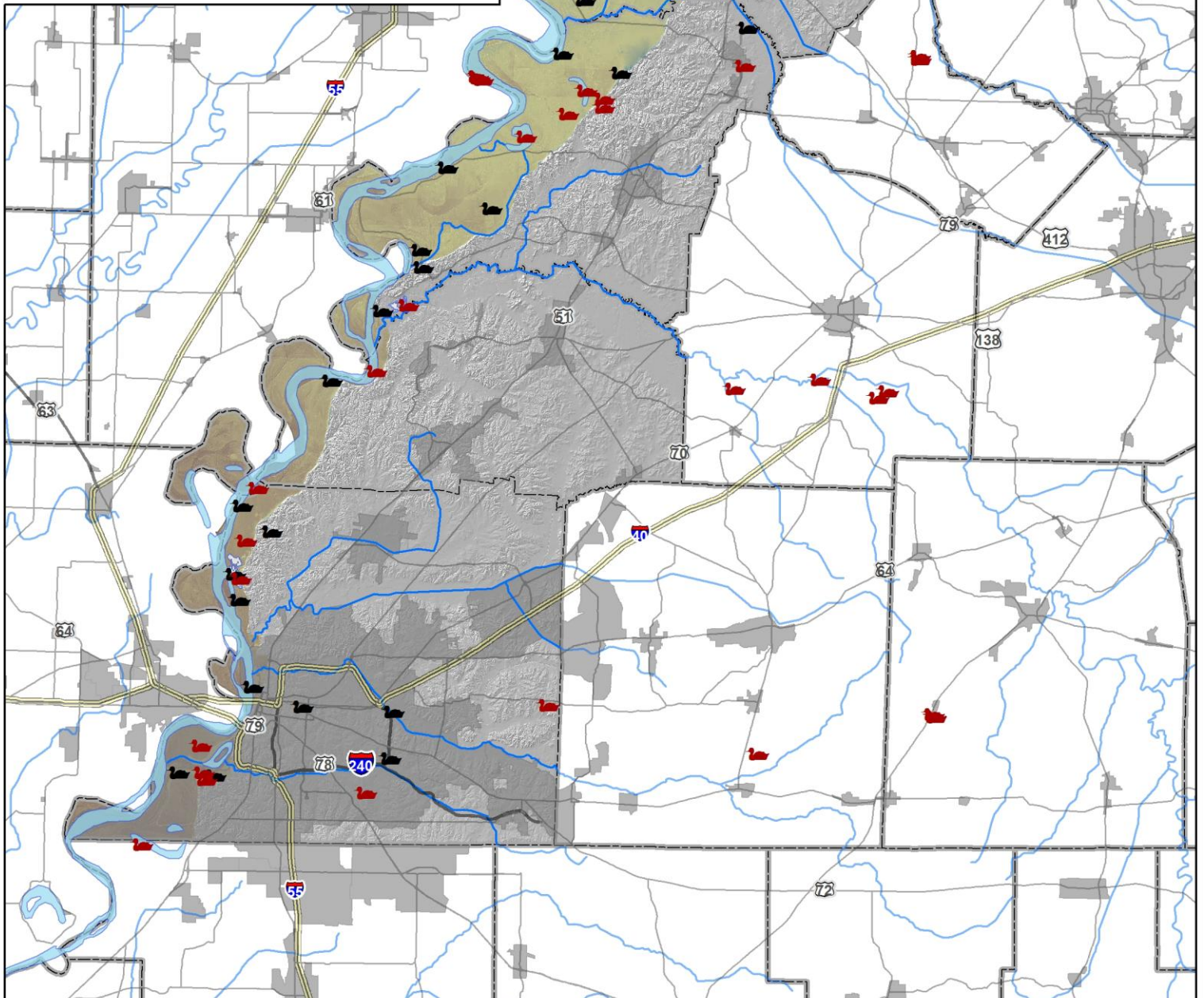
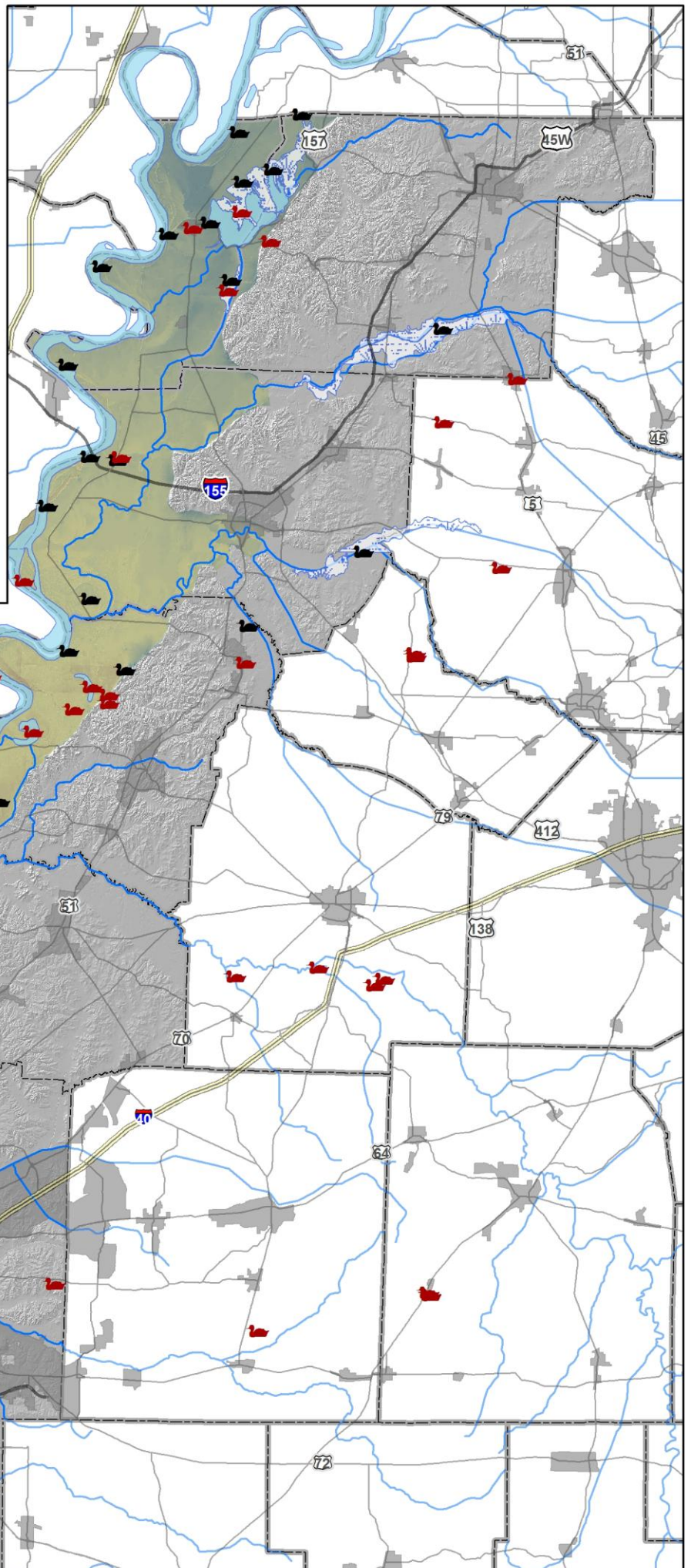
## Corridor Birding Sites

-  Audubon Great River Bird Trail
-  State IBA
-  Lake
-  Marsh
-  Mississippi Alluvial Valley
-  High
-  Low



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bluffs perched dozens of feet above the Mississippi. Each of the 20 overlooks are evenly spaced throughout the Corridor, and all but two are located directly adjacent to one of the scenic routes that will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. To ensure greater accessibility for all travelers, most of the assets in this category are in need of facilities including scenic overlook signs, pull outs for automobiles, or stabilization improvements to ensure safe use for all visitors.

Southern Heritage and Architecture. Communities throughout the Corridor sprang up for a variety of reasons and attracted a wide array of individuals. However, despite the diversity that exists throughout the counties there are also a number of similarities as well. This theme offers a glimpse into the forces and people that molded life in the Corridor today. Ranging from New Deal courthouses that still continue to serve as the physical and symbolic heart of many small towns in the region, to dazzling mansions built from what was the world's biggest cotton market, *Southern Heritage and Architecture* provides visitors with a unique overview of historic life and culture in Corridor communities.

Since the assets in this theme are centered on the human experience within the Corridor, the highest concentrations are found in and around larger municipal areas, with the greatest number of sites in Union City, Dyersburg, and Covington. A great number of sites listed on the National Historic Registry, and numerous others would qualify. Included in the group of National Register properties are several historic districts including South College Historic District in Covington, the Washington and Florida Avenue Historic District in Union City, or the Gordon-Oaks Street Historic District in Dyersburg.



**Figure II-4 Dyer County Courthouse, Dyersburg**

Living with the River: Culture and Commerce. Where *Southern Heritage and Architecture* teaches visitors about the roots of culture in the Corridor, *Living with the River: Commerce and Culture* provides them with an understanding of the food, people, businesses, and towns that



**Figure II-5 Stax Museum, Shelby County**

reflect life in the Corridor today. The sites included in this theme include the sounds of the River like the Stax Museum in Memphis or the boyhood home of Carl Perkins in Tiptonville, as well as a broad array of small towns rich in character and history, world famous culinary delights, and farms, orchards, and other agricultural sites that have formed an integral part of the Southern economy for generations.

The goal is to provide visitors with an intimate look at culture in the Corridor and to allow them to taste, hear, and feel life on the River. Since this theme looks at the relationship between the River and its inhabitants, the majority of sites lie in and around incorporated areas, and in some cases include the incorporated areas themselves. They include the culture and sounds of big cities and the



character and hospitality of small rural communities, all of which coalesce into a single coherent picture of life in the River Valley.

The Civil War and Its Aftermath. This theme chronicles the strategic role that the Mississippi played throughout the war, but also demonstrates the war's human toll through several cemeteries scattered throughout the Corridor. Though it contains the fewest number of sites of any theme, the sites that are included possess some of the most interesting glimpses into the bloodiest conflict in US history. Included with this list is one of the only remaining powder magazines in the State of Tennessee, a home that served as headquarters for numerous Union generals throughout the war, and a Confederate fort that continues to host an annual reenactment.



**Figure II-6 Civil War Reenactment, Lake County**



**Figure II-8 Jamestown, Tipton County** and current home of the National Civil Rights Museum; Jamestown, one of the earliest African American settlements whose origin predates the Civil War; and two routes used to resettle Native Americans during the Trail of Tears.

Beyond a cluster of sites in Memphis, stops within this theme are spread out throughout the remainder of the Corridor, with the exception of one gap in Dyer County. Though it is likely that there are additional sites to be found in Dyer County, they were not identified by any of the sources used to generate the list of assets utilized for this study.



**Figure II-7 Lorraine Motel, National Civil Rights Museum, Shelby County**

## River Centers

Each county will contain a River Center that will serve as a gateway to the River Corridor and to that individual county. The Centers will serve as nodes that provide a place for residents and visitors to access and experience the river. The centers will highlight the themes identified in the previous section and will provide access, information, and resources for engagement, education, and recreation. Though each center will reflect the character of the individual counties, they will

also be complimentary of one another and contain common characteristics throughout in order to maintain continuity of place and support the Corridor as a single destination.

Geographic Clusters of Assets by Themes. By grouping and mapping individual assets by theme, discernable patterns and spatial clusters become more identifiable and offer a starting point for identifying potential locations for River Centers. During this process, not only were the concentration of assets evaluated, but so too was the relative significance of each site in terms of its potential draw.

Each site retained on the list of assets received a rating between 1 and 3, where 1 refers to a site of national significance, 2 a regionally significant site, and 3 a locally significant site. The starting point for assigning scores gives each asset included on the final list of Intrinsic Qualities from the Byway application a rating of 1 since these were sites that the MRCT and county task force committees agreed were important enough to receive national recognition. Several different resources such as county task force committee input, feedback from board members of the MRCT, documentation for state and federal historic property designations, as well as numerous others were used to gauge local sentiment in order to establish a rating of 2. Table II-1 shows the rating for assets within each theme and provides an overview of the primary sites within each theme. For a detailed listing of each site along with the rating that it received refer to Table A-1 in the appendix.

While this approach worked for most of the themes discussed previously, *Reconnecting with the River* posed a little more of a challenge since there were fewer resources available in regards to community input. To categorize the sites in this classification, the ratings were based upon jurisdictional oversight and range of visitor draw. Federal lands and parks associated with Reelfoot received a rating of 1 while the remaining sites were assigned a 2 or 3 according to whether they were unique to a specific location, or were fairly common throughout the corridor.

Site Criteria. In selecting the most strategic location for each River Center, there are several criteria which should be considered in terms of the site's accessibility and land suitability. The criteria outlined below should not be applied independently, but should be layered and weighted to reflect the priorities of the individual counties. An effective evaluation will utilize a multivariate approach that prioritizes each criterion in order to analyze potential sites simultaneously through several iterations, selecting those that best meet the needs of the Corridor and each individual county.

The criteria listed below are intended to provide a general set of guidelines that will help identify and organize the wide array of information needed for selecting the specific location for each River Center. Since the development of priorities for site selection is beyond the scope of this plan, the criteria have been used to create a generalized concept map that illustrates potential locations for River Centers.

River Centers should be accessible to a variety of users and should seek a balance in their proximity to major roadways, the proposed Great River Road national scenic byway, regional scenic byways, proposed greenways and blueways, as well as the Mississippi River Trail. It is important to note that the identification of specific sites should take into account both the need to

attract visitors who pass through the Corridor while traveling to an alternative destination as well as travelers whose primary purpose is to visit each River Center throughout the Corridor. Vehicular access should be as direct as possible and should avoid unnecessary detours or deviations.

In addition to making River Centers accessible to automotive travelers, additional consideration should be given to non-motorized travelers including paddlers, cyclists, and hikers. Avoiding dangerous intersections, roadways with high traffic volumes and speeds, and areas without adequate access to waterways will help ensure that all visitors' needs are met and will help establish River Centers as destination points for recreationalists seeking refuge from cities for a day or a weekend.

Finally, River Centers should be located within a reasonable distance of a critical mass of assets within each county. The identification of asset clusters should take into account not just a significant number of sites within close proximity of one another, but also each asset's ability to draw tourists from within the Corridor and from around the nation. Consideration of both the quantity and significance of each asset in the overall analysis will ensure a steady stream of visitors and revenue to each River Center.

The suitability of any particular piece of land is contingent upon numerous factors that should balance the needs of the natural environment, the needs of travelers who are seeking to experience the natural beauty of the Mississippi River, and the potential that each site has in strengthening communities throughout the Corridor. The overarching goal of each River Center should be to establish a harmony with the surrounding environment and to minimize the amount of impact that may result from its construction. While the economic costs associated with the River Centers are important, their consideration should be in tandem with that of the environment, not independent.

River Centers should provide views of the Mississippi, the valley, or its bluffs that instill a sense of awe in visitors, but these vistas should not come at the expense of the natural beauty of the landscape. When evaluating a site's potential, a viewshed analysis should be conducted to ensure that a potential site and the proposed structure does not detract from the natural landscape, but rather blends seamlessly with its surrounding context.

In addition to considerations of the potential impacts that Centers may have on visitors and residents, equal consideration should be given to ensure that the natural environment is not harmed either. Sufficient distance from existing streams and wetlands should be factored in so that no impact is felt either during construction or as a result of the day-to-day operations of the Center. Additional consideration should be paid to the natural migration patterns of wildlife and sufficient attention should be given to avoid any disruption of movement by birds and mammals throughout the region.

Creating a destination that allows visitors and residents to experience the Mississippi inherently creates challenges to selecting a site. Despite the additional challenges that arise due to the location of each county in regards to its orientation to the River, they should be viewed and treated as barriers not impediments to the development of River Centers. River Centers should be

**Table II-1 Mississippi River Corridor Asset Themes by County**

**Experiencing the River**

	National	Regional	Local	Total	National Assets	Local & Regional Assets (foci)
Shelby	2		3	5	Chickasaw Bluff#3 / Chickasaw Bluff#4	overlook & park
Tipton	1			1	Chickasaw Bluff#2	overlooks
Lauderdale	2	4		6	Chickasaw Bluff#1 / Fulton Port Overlook	overlook & park
Dyer	1		1	2	Heloise Overlook	Fishgap Hill Overlook
Lake		4		4		
Obion		1		1		
Totals	6	9	4	19		

**Reconnecting with the River**

	National	Regional	Local	Total	National Assets	Local & Regional Assets (foci)
Shelby	1	6	4	11	Mirimichi Golf Course (Justin Timberlake)	parks & greenbelt
Tipton			1	1		
Lauderdale	3	4	4	11	Chickasaw NWR / Hatchie River / Lower Hatchie NWR	lakes / WMA / NWR
Dyer		3	6	9		wildlife & nature
Lake	3	3		6	Reelfoot Lake SP / Reelfoot Lake WMA / Lake Isom NWR	
Obion	2	4		6	Reelfoot NWR / Reelfoot WMA	
Totals	9	20	15	44		

**Living with the River: Commerce & Culture**

	National	Regional	Local	Total	National Assets	Local & Regional Assets (foci)
Shelby	12	2	4	18	Beale St. / Mud Island / Chucalissa / Peabody, etc.	
Tipton	1	1	2	4	Randolf	veterans museum, shops & gin
Lauderdale	4	4	2	10	Ripley / Henning / Ft. Prudhomme site	restaurants & towns
Dyer		2		2		
Lake		6		6		
Obion	1	4	1	6	Discovery Park Museum	gunworks museum & Flippens
Totals	18	19	9	46		



**Southern Heritage & Architecture**

	National	Regional	Local	Total	National Assets	Local & Regional Assets (foci)
Shelby		1	1	2		
Tipton	1	9	1	11	Covington Court Square	commercial & religious buildings
Lauderdale		3		3		
Dyer	1	5	1	7	Dyersburg Court Square	Hist. District / houses /bridge
Lake		2		2		
Obion		12	2	14		houses / public & pvt. Buildings
Totals	2	32	5	39		

**The Struggle for Civil Rights**

	National	Regional	Local	Total	National Assets	Local & Regional Assets (foci)
Shelby	1	1	1	3	National Civil Rights Museum	Slavehaven & park
Tipton	1	2		3	Jamestown	
Lauderdale	1	3		4	Alex Haley Museum & Historic Site	cemetery & Choctow Village
Dyer				0		
Lake		2		2		church & school
Obion		3		3		church & barbershop
Totals	3	11	1	15		

**The Civil War and its Aftermath**

	National	Regional	Local	Total	National Assets	Local & Regional Assets (foci)
Shelby		1	2	3		
Tipton	1			1	Fort Wright	parks & Hunt-Phelan house
Lauderdale	1			1	Fort Pillow	
Dyer				0		
Lake	2			2		
Obion		1		1	Island #10 Battlefield Site / Jones Chapel Church & cemetery	
Totals	4	2	2	8		

an example of low impact development or redevelopment, depending on the most ideal location. While the best locations are usually those that have already been developed, not all of the River Centers are best suited for previously developed sites. Ideally, if no building is available for an adaptive reuse, centers should be located on sites that have access to public utilities. If the site is a redevelopment project, effort should be taken to restore previously degraded land to a state that is as closely related to its natural condition as is feasibly possible.

For centers that are to be located in more rural settings, the goal should be to create a building that is completely self-sufficient, both in terms of its energy production as well as in waste disposal. Solar panels, geothermal energy, and wind and current-driven turbines all offer potential sources of energy for individual River Centers. Not only should River Centers educate visitors about the ecology of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley, they should also educate visitors about ways to minimize our impact.

While the presence of the floodplain doesn't necessarily preclude the siting of a river center at any particular location, to do so would require additional effort in terms of research, construction, maintenance, and accessibility. Placing a river center in an area that is subject to regular flooding, provided that the necessary precautions are taken to eliminate any possibility of damage to either property or environment, offers a unique possibility to educate visitors and residents alike about the annual cycles of the river and the role that they play in agriculture, bird migration, and maintenance of ecological integrity.

After all criteria have been mapped and evaluated, their intersection reveals a potential location for River Centers throughout the Corridor. Map II-3 below shows the general location of potential River Centers after an un-weighted analysis. Each of the assets are drawn by theme and displayed according to its relative influence as explained above (Table A-1). Larger points reflect assets that have a more national draw including National Wildlife Refuges, medium sites reflect a more regional draw, and the smallest points are more local.

Most counties within the Corridor have plenty of sites that are able to meet the standards outlined above. The most notable exceptions to this, however, are Lauderdale and Dyer counties, which are confronted with a much larger floodplain and fewer bluffs adjacent to the river and therefore faced with the challenge of balancing the need for environmental integrity and accessibility.

River Center Functions. River Centers should be multi-function facilities with buildings and grounds that provide the most complete range of family activities for river-related education and recreation. Each Center should highlight a theme related to its county and at the same time carry on common Mississippi River Corridor themes and direct travelers to sites within their county that relate to whichever trail they are following.

The size of River Center buildings and grounds should vary according to the final location and functions chosen by individual counties. However, buildings should be in the range of around 20,000 sq. ft. and the grounds could be up to 50 acres with additional acreage in an existing natural or historic site. However, it should be noted that each Center should be self-sustaining and should be able to generate revenues sufficient enough to cover operating and debt service expenses.

In order to attract the widest array of visitors possible, River Centers should provide a variety of services and serve numerous functions for both River communities and visitors. Some possible facilities should include space for exhibits and meetings, kitchen and gift shop. Additionally, the building and grounds should be designed to accommodate regular visitors and special groups such as weddings, reunions, student groups for special classes, civic/fraternal organizations, government agency meetings, and tour groups. The River Centers should include interpretive centers such as botanic gardens or an arboretum with native plants, freshwater aquariums, or hiking trails that serve as outdoor and indoor classrooms for K-12 students from throughout the area and beyond.

The Centers should also function as both destination and stop over points for travelers exploring the region. Facilities should be provided to accommodate the multitude of needs generated by RVs, cyclists on the Mississippi River Trail, paddlers on one of the regional blueways, hikers, and families with small children.

River Center Concept Designs. River Centers should stand as symbols of the role that the Mississippi River plays in defining the life and culture throughout the Mississippi River Corridor. As symbols, River Centers should take every step possible to minimize their impact on the natural environment, and where possible should restore habitats that have been degraded as a result of previous development. Each Center should reflect the character of its respective communities, while simultaneously reflecting the character of the Corridor as a whole; and though the size, location, and design of individual Centers is dependent upon the uses and programming that occur at each, there are some general designs that should be common throughout.

The following are two concept designs for River Centers that serve as examples of how the Centers may appear and the types of functions they might house. These designs were created by second year students in the Department of Architecture at The University of Memphis as a component of the Architectural Design Studio II class, under the direction of Professors Michael Hagge and Michael Chisamore. A total of eleven designs were completed by the class and presented to juried competition with MRC-T staff, the University of Memphis consultants, and professional architects serving as the jury. The designs of Kelly May and Robert Paulus were selected for inclusion in this report based on overall quality, fit with the mission and goals of the River Centers, environmental compatibility, and practicality for design implementation.

Each River Center was designed based on a specific rural site located in Lauderdale County on Hwy. 87 west of Henning and Highway 51. However, these designs are adaptable to other settings throughout the corridor. These concept designs represent Centers of approximately 4,000 plus square feet that includes space for three separate exhibits, an auditorium seating up to 50 to 100 persons, a small catering kitchen, offices, restrooms, storage, and outdoor gathering spaces.

These designs illustrate the potential look and feel of a River Center, and the square footage could be increased to accommodate larger exhibit or meeting space. Likewise, different building materials can be used to fit other contexts or to address a particular corridor theme. These designs would likely yield a cost per square foot range of \$150 to \$200, excluding furnishings and equipment. However, material selection and other factors would influence cost. The costs of

land, parking, landscaping, and utility connections would be additional, and these costs could vary widely depending on location and level of quality.

**Concept Design – Kelly May**

This River Center is designed to reach out to Lauderdale County’s history and natural environment, creating a pleasant atmosphere for learning and engaging with nature. The building was designed to serve as “signage” by allowing it’s visibility from the road to be welcoming and inviting during both daytime and nighttime. Building angles were designed to add interest and showcase views to the surrounding landscape.

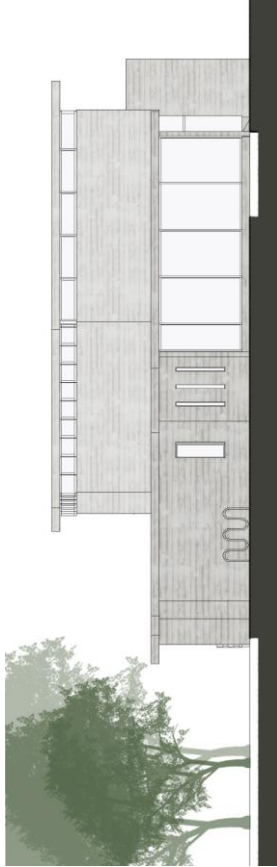


Figure II-12 Building elevation, west view



Figure II-11 Building elevation, east view

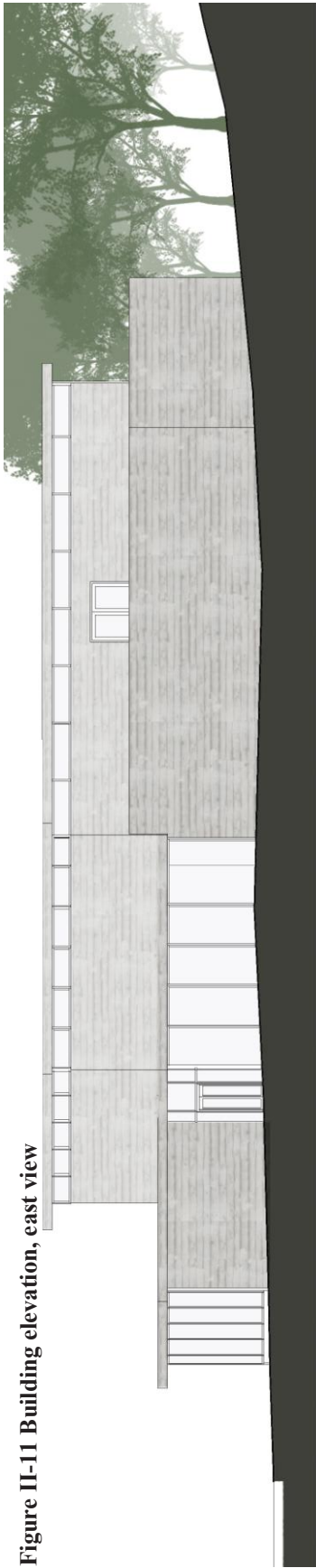


Figure II-13 Building elevation, south view

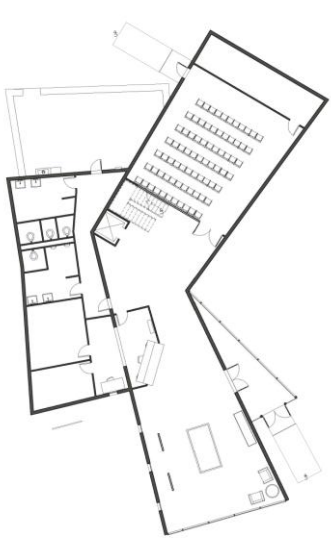


Figure II-9 Building footprint, first floor



Figure II-10 Building footprint, second floor





Figure II-17 Building entrance

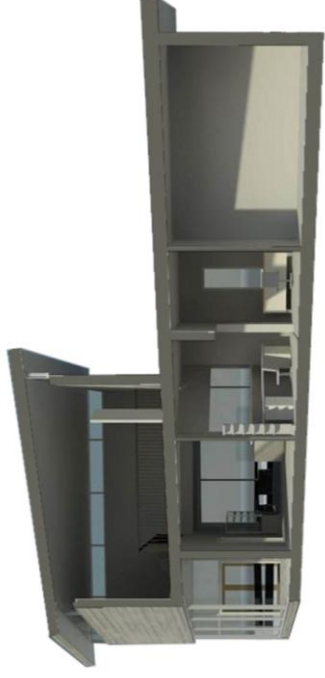


Figure II-14 Building profile

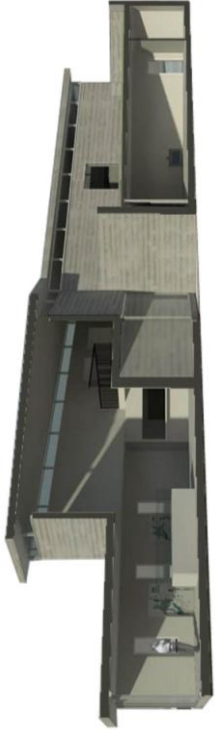


Figure II-16 Building profile

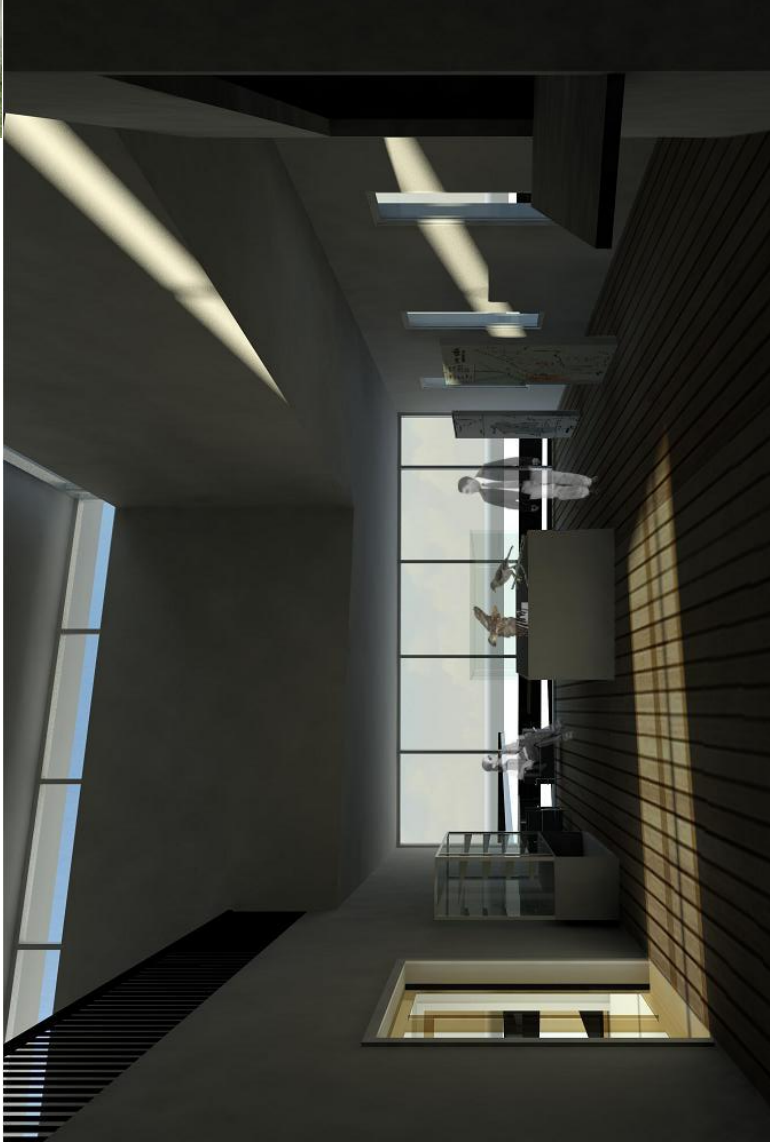


Figure II-15 Inside gallery

**Concept Design – Robert Paulus**

Capturing Lauderdale County’s long and rich historical tradition, this River Center was designed to showcase various historic eras in a linear form represented by a rectangular structure. Exhibit space lines one side of the building, while the other has full length windows open to viewing nature. The building’s solar orientation maximizes heat gain or loss depending on the season.

Separated from the main structure is a small building that will serve as a pleasing rest station for bicyclists on the MRT. Convenient camping spaces and other amenities could be located nearby

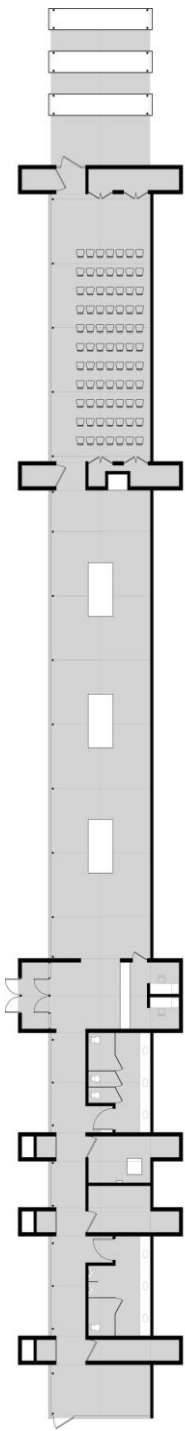


Figure II-19 Building footprint



Figure II-18 Building as seen from the south



Figure II-20 Building as seen from the north



Figure II-24 Main hall of the Center



Figure II-23 Approaching the building from the south

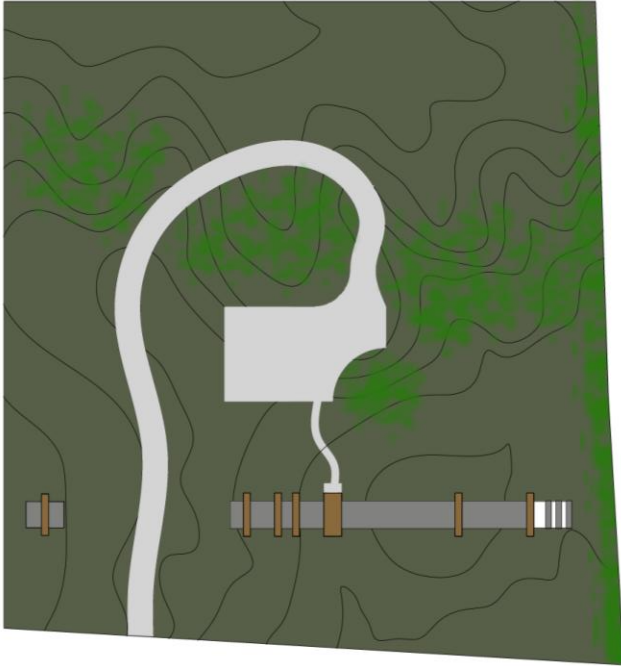


Figure II-22 Site plan showing position of the building in relation to the road and topography



Figure II-21 Viewing gallery facing west



## CHAPTER III CONNECTIVITY

In order for Tennessee's Mississippi River Corridor to be a unified destination, all parts of the Corridor should be woven together by a network of pathways that comfortably connect travelers to the attractions and service providers within the Corridor. The primary roads leading to and through the corridor should have clearly defined information points to guide the visitor.

The most important path within the Corridor will be the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. Interstate routes I-55 (I-155), I-40 (I-240) and I-69 (I-269) will be the primary routes to access the Great River Road via the community gateways discussed in the following sections.

### Routes of Travel and Exploration

This section discusses important routes of movement in the Corridor. This discussion provides the framework for connecting travelers between communities, river centers and educational/recreational attractions.

Existing Road System. Over the next several years Interstate Highway 69 will be fully complete between the Tennessee state border at South Fulton and Shelby County's southern boundary at the Mississippi state line. This route will essentially replace U.S. Highway 51, the current main north-south route through the Corridor. This limited access freeway will bring national and regional travelers into the River Corridor and will have the greatest impact on economic development from tourism. Currently, the I-269 loop is being completed around Shelby County, which will connect to I-55 in Mississippi and I-40 in Tennessee and provide added access to the Corridor.

In addition, I-55 in Arkansas and I-40 between Nashville and Memphis have exit points to bring travelers into the Corridor. Map III-1, which follows, shows these routes and their relationship to the six-county corridor.

A network of state and federal highways exists to connect the freeways to important gateways, Corridor assets, and byways. These arterials allow the traveler to leave the freeways at various points and be guided to scenic roads and the historic attractions. Map III-1 shows the key points of exit.

Proposed Scenic Byways. As previously noted the MCR-T, Inc., working with State and local governments, submitted an application to the Federal Highway Administration in December 2008 for designation of a route in the River Corridor to be the **Great River Road National Scenic Byway**. The route was designated as a Tennessee parkway by Commissioner Nicely of the State of Tennessee Department of Transportation.

In a parallel study, the MRCT identified additional scenic routes in the Mississippi River Corridor to compliment the Great River Road and bring visitors in closer contact with the

Mississippi River and the many attractions in the six-county Corridor. Two scenic road spurs were identified – a “river valley” route and a “bluff” route. The Great River Road and the two scenic spurs are shown on Map III-1.

The Great River Road in Tennessee begins at the Kentucky state line, as an extension of Kentucky’s GRR route, on State Route 78 and ends at the Mississippi State border on Federal Highway 61, the beginning of Mississippi’s Great River Road.

The Great River Road in Tennessee’s Mississippi River Corridor runs next to the Mississippi River until the route turns eastward on State Route 88 to U.S. 51 and the City of Halls. This change in direction from the River is due to seasonal flooding in western Lauderdale County. From Halls the GRR goes south on U. S. 51 to Ripley where it turns westward on St. Rt. 19, then south on St. Rt. 209 through the Tully Wildlife Management Area and then eastward on St. Rt. 87 back to U.S. 51 at Henning. This is necessary because there is no bridge across the Hatchie River from St. Rts. 209 and 87.

From Henning the GRR goes south on U.S. 51 to Covington where it turns westward on St. Rt. 59 to Chickasaw Bluff No. 2 and then southward into Shelby County and through Shelby Forest State Park (Chickasaw Bluff No. 3). From this point the GRR returns to U.S. 51 for its final leg into downtown Memphis. Upon leaving downtown Memphis the route goes down U.S. 61 to its Tennessee terminus. Map III-1 shows the entire route.

There are points at two Mississippi River tributaries that block the logical continuation of the GRR close to the Mississippi. Both of these barriers force the GRR away from the River environment back to U.S. 51, which is not very scenic.

The first blockage is the Hatchie River between Lauderdale and Tipton counties. A new bridge with road connectors from St. Rt. 209/87 and St. Rt. 59 should be constructed. This bridge should be context sensitive and not cause any harm to the Lower Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge, the river’s scenery, nor harm its potential as a greenway and blueway.

The second barrier is the Loosahatchie River at the northern edge of Memphis. A reconstructed bridge connecting north and south Benjestown Road should be completed. This bridge washed away a number of years ago and was not replaced. This reconstruction will not only provide a unique valley forest experience from the bluff at Shelby Forest but would allow continuation of the MRT cycle trail.

In addition to the Great River Road, this Plan recommends a number of scenic spurs or loop routes from the GRR. These spurs can offer more direct exposure to the Mississippi River’s environment.

The first series of spurs is identified on Map III-1 as “River Valley Routes”. There are six of these scenic routes that take the traveler from and back to the GRR. Each spur route offers either enhanced views of the Mississippi River or more intense experiences of the River’s natural resources.

The second spur route is called the “Bluff Route”. This is a more extensive route than the river valley spurs and is a parallel route which offers magnificent bluff top views of the alluvial valley along the Mississippi River

The bluff route starts from the GRR at Reelfoot Lake going eastward on St. Rt. 22 to Union City where the bluff route turns southward on a series of state and county roads before joining back with the GRR at Ripley. A final side spur is a bluff route between St. Rts. 19 and 87, west of Ripley and Henning respectively.

The foregoing system of scenic byways forms the connective threads that allow the traveler to experience the full range of Mississippi River Corridor resources. Further review of potential byways shows several non-road paths as follows.

Greenways, Trails, and Blueways. The Corridor has a good supply of existing or potential greenways, trails and blueways. In Shelby County plans have been prepared and partially implemented to create a greenway along the entire length of the Wolf River. Repairs are being made to restore the river and eliminate problems caused by channelization. Boat ramps exist and are being upgraded and additional boat launch points are being established. A blueway can be created when there is a formal river rescue program with additional access points.

The Wolf River along with the Hatchie River offers the best greenway and blueway opportunities in the Corridor. With clear and committed plans to restore the Obion and Forked Deer rivers, planning can begin with greenway and blueway mapping. As previously stated a portion of the North Fork of the Forked Deer River at Dyersburg has potential for State recognition and promotion. With formal blueway, greenway and trails identified, route and map signs can be placed beginning at the existing boat ramps as shown on Map III-1. The pictures above show some options for this signage.



**Figure III-1 Trail signs for boating and hiking**

Source: Lower right <http://www.waymarking.com>; all others <http://www.lakecountyfl.gov/boating/blueways.aspx>

## Way Finding

“Wayfinding” is a set of elements to orient a traveler for choosing a comfortable, correct path to a destination. The term was first used in 1960 by Kevin Lynch in The Image of the City where he referred to landmarks, paths, nodes, maps, street numbers, and directional signs as elements of wayfinding. While signs and maps are the most used wayfinding devices, design of the environment can provide the necessary orientation for finding one’s way. In fact the color, texture and materials of sidewalks or road pavement can make it the obvious route for a trip and virtually no signs would be needed (Boston’s patriot trail is a blue stripe on the sidewalk to guide the visitor).

There are many ways to find out where you are going including directional signage, announcement signs, route signs, maps, information centers and landscaping.

Branding is important. The Corridor should not have a confusing array of signals but should look and feel like a single park with the different attractions tied together. People living in the corridor, especially service providers (motels, restaurants, supply stores and welcome centers) should speak in one voice about the Corridor and its attractions. Currently there are too many brands within the Corridor and an umbrella logo and wayfinding symbol should tie everything together. The signs and structures needed for wayfinding are discussed below with examples.



Figure III-2 The Brands Logo

Gateway Centers. A tourist information center/museum should be located in each of the communities along U.S. 51 with an exit from I-69 to provide an important beginning point to explore the Corridor. These Centers can be in an existing or new building and house several functions including a display of the city and county’s history and resources.

Gateway Centers serve to explain the scenic byway system and points of interest, particularly the River Centers and a cluster of attractions in each municipality and county. Map III-2 shows the location of Gateway Centers.



Figure III-3 Displays in a Gateway Center

Source: Google, Inc.



Kiosks, Shelters, and Overlooks. There are numerous points of interest throughout the Corridor. These might be scenic overlooks on one of the bluffs or places to be introduced to the natural beauty and conservation efforts in the Corridor. These are places for pausing in the journey to have a picnic or rest and enjoy the environment. The kiosks are for providing information about the site and directions to other sites; the shelters are for relief from the hot, cold or wet elements; and overlooks are for a comfortable place to view the scenery. All three can be combined in one place and the design and markers should be consistent with other similar points in the Corridor.



Source: Above, top right Google, Inc.; Right Amie Vanderford



**Figure III-4 Kiosks, shelters, and overlooks**



### Interpretive Stands.

These are information structures that have maps of the immediate area being explored or the larger region. The stands might also commemorate a historical place and explain the significance of past events. These stands are for a short time away from the byway and do not involve an extended stay.



**Figure III-5 Interpretive stands**

Source: Top left, <http://www.thehistoryworkshop.com>; Above and left, Amie Vanderford



Source: Gene Pearson



Figure III-6 Interpretive stands

Source: <http://urbanplacesandspaces.blogspot.com>

**Gateways.** These are physical structures or landscaped approaches to signal that the traveler is entering the Mississippi River Corridor. A single design should be selected for all gateways with locations shown on Map III-2. This will be the best opportunity to use the umbrella brand logo.



Source: Above and top right, Gene Pearson; Top, <http://www.corbindesign.com>; Right, Google, Inc.



Figure III-7 Examples of Gateway structures



Entryways. These are secondary to the Corridor gateways and are for the purpose of welcoming the visitor to a particular place such as a River Center, park, wildlife preserve or larger scenic overlook.



Source: Above, Amie Vanderford; Top left and right, Gene Pearson

**Figure III-8 Entryway landscaping and signs**

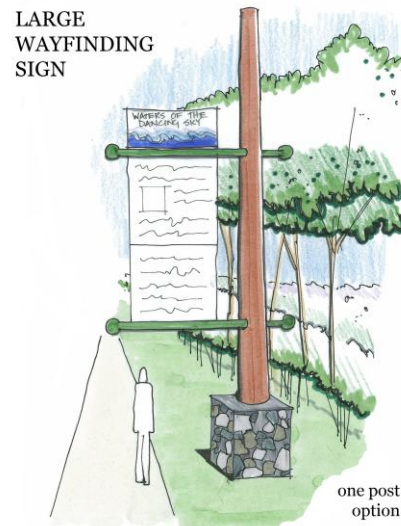
Corridor Announcement Signs. These are signs placed about ½ to 1 mile before exiting the primary roads to the corridor or corridor byways to an attraction. These signs signal the pending arrival and help orient the visitor to the coming turn. The location of announcement signs is shown on Map III-2.



**Figure III-9 Announcement signs**

Route Markers. These signs are similar to announcement signs in that they orient the traveler, but more important these signs provide assurance that the traveler is still on the correct path.

They can stand alone or be combined with directional signs. The scenic byways should have these route markers.



**Figure III-10 Route markers (see also Great River Road and Mississippi River Trail markers)**

Directional Signs. These are the most common signs for wayfinding and along with announcement signs and route markers are regulated by the federal government under the “Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways” published by the Federal Highway Administration. Directional signs are ubiquitous throughout the world and usually provide the necessary directions like at interchanges to show the number and direction of a new road. However, when these route directions have various additional markers mounted on or nearby the signs, the message can be confusing.



**Figure III-11 Directional signs with one confusing array.**



In addition to directional signs on the byways and highways within the corridor, there are two “connecting routes” from I-40 shown on Map III-2. These connecting routes and possible other roads that extend outside the corridor should have directional signage for the Gateway Centers and Corridor byways.

The system of wayfinding in the Mississippi River Corridor is the most important element in the environmental enhancement plan along with the River Centers. The attractions are in place. The roads are designated, and the communities are promoting their historic resources. There now needs to be a simple set of wayfinding devices with common design themes so that the traveler knows at all times that he/she is participating in a special place made up of six Mississippi River counties.

## CHAPTER IV      MARKET ASSESSMENT

In order to attract new visitors to the Mississippi River Corridor it is important to understand the regional and national markets for leisure travel, and the experiences that will be desired by visitors. This chapter presents market information on three regions from which the corridor will attract the majority of its visitors, along with trends in outdoor recreation activities that are appropriate for the corridor.

### Mississippi River Corridor Visitor Potential

A substantial portion of the U.S. population lives sufficiently close to the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee for frequent vacation travel. Over 84 million persons are within a 500 mile drive of the corridor, including the population centers of Chicago, Dallas, Atlanta, St. Louis, and Milwaukee.

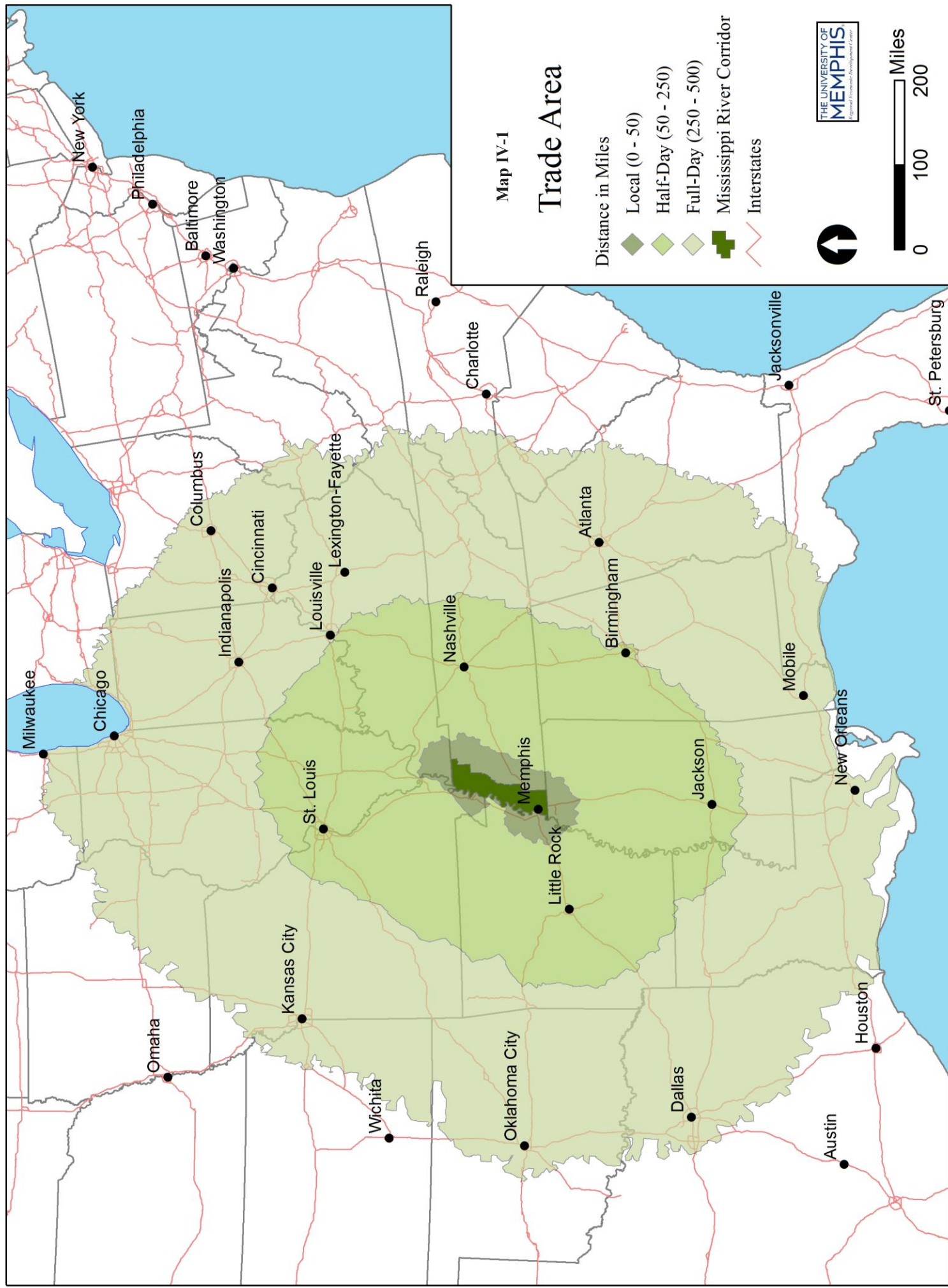
Mississippi River Corridor Markets. The map on the following page shows market areas for the Mississippi River Corridor – Tennessee for local visitors (up to 50 miles), a half-day drive (50 to 250 miles), and a full-day drive (250 to 500 miles). Population estimates within these three travel distances are shown in the table below.

**Table IV-1**  
**MRCT Market Area Population**

	2007 Population Estimate	Cumulative Population
Local (up to 50 miles)	1,819,383	1,819,383
Half Day Drive (50 to 250 miles)	14,481,091	16,300,474
One Day Drive (250 to 500 miles)	68,209,068	84,509,542

Source: REDC calculations based on ESRI census tract data.

A strong market characteristic of the Mississippi River Corridor is the large population base of over 1.8 million that can be considered local, particularly as much of the corridor consists of primarily natural areas and small towns. The Memphis metropolitan area, along with the Jackson, Tennessee MSA, provides large urban populations within a short drive of the entire corridor. This local market area also includes most counties in west Tennessee, along with smaller portions of Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri, and Mississippi. The significance of this large local market is that it affords the prospect for frequent day trip visitors, plus the opportunity to entice travelers to and through Memphis to visit the corridor.



The population within 250 miles<sup>2</sup> of the corridor substantially increases the potential visitor base, adding 14.5 million persons that can easily reach the corridor in a one half day drive. Population within this range of outdoor recreation opportunities is particularly important as a distance of 200 miles has been reported to be the maximum market area for participation in many types of outdoor recreation.<sup>3</sup> The network of interstate highways and other limited access roads entering the corridor from adjacent states should easily extend this 200 mile range to 250 miles for our market penetration.

Cities within this half day drive include St. Louis, Louisville, Nashville, Little Rock, Birmingham, and Jackson, Mississippi. Each of these cities is connected to the corridor by interstate highways, principally I-40 and I-55/I-155. Completion of I-69 will aid residents of Kentucky, Indiana, and Louisiana reach the corridor, while final completion of I-22 between Memphis and Birmingham will allow for easier travel from Alabama. Visitors from the one half day drive distance are especially important for economic development in the corridor as they are much more likely to spend the night, stay longer, and spend more money on food, gas, and gifts than day trippers. Furthermore, visitors from this 250 mile radius may become more important to the corridor as weekend travel gains in popularity while trips over a week's duration show some signs of declining.<sup>4</sup> Particular attention should be given to promoting the corridor in the St. Louis metro area, where its population of 2.8 million is within a relatively short drive of the corridor.

Within a one day drive time of the corridor (500 miles), the market reaches 84.5 million or about 28% of the total U.S. population. This distance is quite suitable for a few days' vacation, or as a stopping point for Midwestern travelers en route to a final destination in Florida or the southwest. Over 70% of travelers to Tennessee are from a 500 mile range of the state.<sup>5</sup> Major cities within a one day drive of the corridor reach as far north as Chicago, Milwaukee, and Columbus, and as far south as Dallas, New Orleans, Atlanta, and the Florida panhandle. When I-69 is completed through Louisiana and Texas, Houstonians will also be able to easily reach the corridor in a day's drive. Overall, the completion of I-69 will make access to the corridor considerably easier for residents of Texas, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.

Visitor counts from interstate highway welcome centers provide a gauge on the number of visitors currently entering the corridor from other states. The I-55 welcome center entering Memphis from Mississippi had 395,000 visitors in 2008, while the I-40 welcome center entering Memphis from Arkansas saw 301,000 visitors. In Dyer County, the I-155 welcome center located along the proposed Great River Road and near the center of the Mississippi River Corridor, received 206,000 visitors entering Tennessee from I-55 in Arkansas.<sup>6</sup> In particular, these visitors from I-55 represent potential tourists for the corridor as they enter

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<sup>2</sup> Measured by road miles from any entry point to the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee.

<sup>3</sup> Bowker, J., English, D., and Cordell, K (1995) Projections of Outdoor Recreation Participation to 2050. USDA Forest Service, Athens, GA.

<sup>4</sup> Tourism Trends (2007). Travel Industry Association of America (TIA).

<sup>5</sup> Summary Travel Characteristics for Tennessee, 1995 American Travel Survey, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Washington.

<sup>6</sup> 2008 visitor counts are from Tennessee Tourist Development, Division of Welcome Centers.

the middle section of the corridor and are only a few miles from areas with river overlooks and wildlife viewing.

We can expect about 70% of corridor visitors to come from the above markets within a 500 radius based on tourism patterns throughout the state. The remainder will come from greater distances in the U.S. and Canada. Due to the corridor's proximity to the major east-west interstate systems (principally, I-40 and the I-70 connections to I-55 and I-24), many of the remaining 30% of visitors may come from western and upper Midwestern states. As tourism along the Great River Road increases, more tourists from states along and near the entire length of the Mississippi River can be expected. International travel to the U.S. is also increasing, and the corridor can gain a larger share of this vital market, especially given the river's worldwide recognition and the corridor's proximity to international airports in Memphis and St. Louis.

Major Regional Attractions. The Mississippi River Corridor is fortunate to have major tourist destinations near both the northern and southern entrances. On the south, Memphis, with over 50 tourist attractions, draws over 10 million visitors a year.<sup>7</sup> Beale Street Historic District is the most visited attraction in Tennessee. Memphis' leisure travel feeder markets include the Deep South (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia), the Midwest (Missouri, Illinois, and Ohio), and Texas. Texas is the state of origin for the largest percentage of Memphis tourists (15%), followed by Mississippi (13%).<sup>8</sup> Thirty minutes south of Memphis, Tunica County Mississippi is one of the largest casino gaming destinations in the U.S., attracting 12 million visitors annually<sup>9</sup>.

However, Reelfoot Lake is probably the greatest single attraction in the corridor outside Memphis. Reelfoot Lake, at the northern border of the corridor, is one of the most visited natural areas in the state. Reelfoot Lake State Park and the National Wildlife Refuge combined have over 900,000 annual visitors.<sup>10</sup> Reelfoot Lake has wide geographic appeal, with fishing being the most popular recreational activity. Fifty percent of Reelfoot visitors traveled more than 250 miles, and 42% stayed more than two days, with almost 9% staying over six days.<sup>11</sup> REDC analysis based on Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) creel survey reports from 2003 to 2007 found that 63% of fishermen at Reelfoot Lake are from out of state. The largest percentage was from Illinois (17.6%), followed by Missouri (13.6%), and Ohio (8.9%). This represents the highest percentage of out of state fishermen at any of the twenty TWRA Reservoirs. Interestingly, these are the three Midwestern states having a high percentage of tourists visiting Memphis.

While still under construction, the \$100 million Discovery Park of America on I-69 in Union City will become a major tourist attraction at the northern entrance to the corridor. The

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<sup>7</sup> Memphis Economic Impact Study, Memphis Convention & Visitors Bureau, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Morse, S. (2007) Tennessee 2007 Labor Day Travel Forecast, The University of Tennessee Tourism Institute.

<sup>9</sup> Tunica Convention & Visitors Bureau. <http://tunicatravel.com/group-tours/escort-notes>. Accessed 5/20/09.

<sup>10</sup> Bray, L. (2007). The Regional Importance of Reelfoot Lake, University of Tennessee Center for Transportation Research.

<sup>11</sup> Black, W.P., (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) Tennessee Reservoir Creel Survey, TWRA Fisheries Management Division.



museum is projected to have 275,000 annual visitors and will feature natural history, science and technology, art, botanical gardens, and a children's exploration area.<sup>12</sup>

A major tourist destination, Land Between the Lakes (LBL), is within a one hour drive of the northern entrance to the Mississippi River Corridor. Located in both Kentucky and Tennessee, this U.S. Forest Service National Recreation Area draws approximately two million visitors annually and a \$600 million economic impact.<sup>13</sup> As the largest inland peninsula in the nation, LBL offers substantial opportunities for outdoor recreation, including primitive and backcountry camping, hiking, nature viewing, boating with multiple power and sail marinas, historic sightseeing, and other activities. LBL draws visitors from several surrounding states, and it is noted that many boaters come from a two to four hour drive multiple times during boating season.<sup>14</sup> Land Between the Lakes is important for the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee in that each can easily complement the other, and their proximity will allow the corridor to draw from the large LBL tourist base. With proper marketing and promotion, the Mississippi River Corridor can become a "tourism bridge" between LBL and Memphis.

Overall, Tennessee is one of the stronger markets in the nation for leisure travelers. On the east side of the state, the Great Smokey Mountains and Gatlinburg have a long history as a major vacation destination with over nine million annual visitors. Both Nashville and Memphis are well known for music, professional sports, and other urban attractions. Furthermore, tourism continues to grow in Tennessee with the state's national ranking in person-days spent in the state moving from 11<sup>th</sup> in 2006 to eighth in 2007.<sup>15</sup>

Demographic Influences. Shifting demographics of the American population will become important for leisure travel programming in the next few decades as the U.S. minority population reaches close to 50% of total population by 2050. The local tourist market (up to 50 miles) for the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee is presently 37% African American, declining to 15% in the population within a one day drive. Smaller, but growing percentages of Latinos and Asians make up the minority market within a one day drive. Surveys show that tourism among ethnic groups is growing at rates significantly greater than the majority population. These ethnic markets are important to sustained growth in corridor tourism, and their recreational preferences and participation levels may differ from the majority population. For instance, African Americans outrank other Americans in visiting historical places and museums,<sup>16</sup> and are more likely to participate in group tours.<sup>15, 17</sup>

The Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee is well positioned to attract, in particular, the African American tourist with assets that include the National Civil Rights Museum, the Alex Haley Museum, and other elements in the Struggle for Civil Rights theme. In addition, the Chucalissa Museum and Archaeological Site features the culture and heritage of Native

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<sup>12</sup> Economic Impact Study of Discovery Park, Younger Associates, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Land Between the Lakes Fact Sheet, <http://lbl.org/Newsroom/NEWSFactSheet.html>, Accessed 5/19/09.

<sup>14</sup> Author's observation.

<sup>15</sup> 2008 Report to the Governor, Tennessee Department of Tourism.

<sup>16</sup> Whigham-Desir, M. (December, 1996). Ethnic Travel is Vital to American Tourism, Black Enterprise.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

American peoples. Potential may also exist for development of a Native American exhibit in Lauderdale County where the Choctaw band has land holdings and a significant population in Henning.

The above data on tourist travel in and very near the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee clearly demonstrate that the region has a substantial draw as a tourist destination. Well over 13 million tourists annually are visiting Memphis, Reelfoot Lake, and Land Between the Lakes for activities as diverse as music, fishing, and sightseeing. These visitors are well represented by eleven states extending from Texas to Ohio. The strong market reach of this tourism region can be demonstrated by two particular traveler statistics: 50% of Reelfoot visitors coming from greater than 250 miles, and Texas being the top state supplying tourists to Memphis. A growing U.S. population and interstate highway enhancements already underway will help insure continued tourism growth in the region.

Development of the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee will afford opportunities to attract tourists already visiting the region, plus bring in substantial numbers of new visitors. While the Mississippi River is well known throughout the world, currently there are relatively few locations in the corridor, with the exception of Memphis, where large numbers of tourists actually have the opportunity to experience the river. The 42 corridor assets we have identified with an interest to national audiences cover all six themes, and a large number of these focus specifically on the river. These include overlooks, bluffs, wildlife viewing areas, and representations of the river's commerce and culture. Creation of the Great River Road in Tennessee, along with the river and bluff routes identified in this study, will provide much greater opportunities for both local and distant visitors to experience and appreciate the Mississippi River. Connection of the Great River Road in Tennessee to the Great River Road in the other Lower Mississippi River states will create a unified tourism theme in the nation's midsection.

The economic impact study conducted for Mississippi River Corridor – Tennessee, Inc. by Younger Associates projects 548,000 visitor days within five years. Based on the state average of 2.2 days per stay, this equates to about 250,000 annual visitors. Given the level of existing regional tourism, designation of the Great River Road through the corridor, and other near term developments this projection appears quite obtainable, if not conservative. The Younger Associates study projects 2.2 million visitor days (995,000 visitors) in twenty years. With continued improvements in the corridor, and growth in tourism, this projection should be obtainable.

### **Trends in Outdoor Recreation**

Growth in both the popularity of outdoor recreation and continued growth of the U.S. population will yield significantly greater participation in almost all forms of outdoor recreation over the next four decades.

The U. S. Forest Service has made projections extending to 2050 for the most popular outdoor recreation activities. The five fastest growing activities are expected to be: (1) visiting historic places, (2) downhill skiing, (3) snowmobiling, (4) sightseeing, and (5) non-

consumptive wildlife activities (wildlife viewing).<sup>18,19</sup> With the exception of two winter sports, the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee is well positioned as a destination for outdoor enthusiasts. Three of these top five activities, visiting historic places, sightseeing, and wildlife viewing all have high existing levels of participation, and are projected to be the fastest growing activities in the south over the next several decades.

The following table, abstracted from tables in the U. S. Forest Study, provides levels of participation and growth rates for 18 outdoor recreation activities common to the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee. Current participation and projections for 2020 and 2050 are shown for the total U.S. and for the South Region. Projections are expressed as growth indexes, allowing for comparison between the South Region and the nation, and comparison with population growth.

With the exception of hunting, all activities are projected to increase both nationally and in the South over the next 40 years. In 13 of the 18 activities the South Region will experience higher growth rates than the nation as a whole for both 2020 and 2050. In large measure this results from a higher population growth rate.

Historic/Cultural Tourism. The Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee is rich in assets related to the three highest growth non-winter activities: visiting historic places, sightseeing, and wildlife viewing. Several important historic places are present in both urban and rural communities in the corridor, and are most prevalent in two corridor themes: The Struggle for Civil Rights and The Civil War and its Aftermath. Numerous opportunities for sightseeing and wildlife viewing are available throughout the corridor. Interest in sightseeing is projected to double in the South Region by 2050, and generous opportunities exist throughout the corridor. Bluffs and overlooks represented by the Experiencing the River theme, along with the proposed river and bluff routes along the entire corridor, will be critical in meeting this growing demand. Continued improvements to these assets, connectivity enhancements, and marketing can increase the regional and national appeal of the above high growth recreational activities.

Wildlife Viewing. Wildlife viewing will see substantial growth both nationally and in the South, with participation almost doubling by 2050. The Reconnecting with the River theme includes over 40 areas, including state and national wildlife refuges, greenways, and Reelfoot Lake that are prime locations for viewing a wide variety of species.

Bird watching, as a particular focus of wildlife viewing, is currently witnessing unparalleled growth in the U. S. Most of the growth has been in the South where bird watching is most prevalent.<sup>20</sup> A rapidly growing component of avitourism is birding festivals, which have

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<sup>18</sup> Bowker, J., English, D., and Cordell, K (1995) Projections of Outdoor Recreation Participation to 2050. USDA Forest Service, Athens, GA.

<sup>19</sup> These projections are based on statistical modeling that incorporates historical participation levels, regional population growth, natural resource supply variables, and demographic trends including age, education, ethnicity, and income.

<sup>20</sup> Cordell, K. & Herbert, N. (February, 2002). The Popularity of Birding is still Growing, Birding.

grown from just a handful in 1990 to over 200 in the U.S. and Canada,<sup>21</sup> with some festivals drawing tens of thousands of participants.<sup>22</sup> The Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee has 42 state-identified Important Bird Areas (IBA) stretching throughout the corridor and 34 sites listed on the Audubon Bird Trail. Reelfoot Lake is a well known winter nesting site for the American Bald Eagle. Birding can easily become a major attraction in the corridor for both the casual bird watcher and the serious enthusiast.

**Table IV-2 Outdoor Recreation Activities Participation Projections to 2050**

	Total U.S.			South Region		
	Participants	Projection Index		Participants	Projection Index	
	1995	2020	2050	1995	2020	2050
Canoeing *	14,100,000	1.15	1.46	4,200,000	1.11	1.34
Motorboating	47,000,000	1.21	1.55	15,500,000	1.24	1.59
Rafting/Floating	15,200,000	1.07	1.24	4,900,000	1.02	1.18
Fishing	57,900,000	1.17	1.36	20,200,000	1.19	1.39
Hunting	18,600,000	0.91	0.89	6,500,000	0.74	0.64
Wildlife Viewing	116,700,000	1.29	1.61	34,200,000	1.38	1.86
Backpacking	15,200,000	1.11	1.26	3,600,000	1.15	1.42
Hiking	47,800,000	1.23	1.57	11,300,000	1.32	1.78
Walking	133,700,000	1.21	1.46	40,000,000	1.11	1.34
Biking	57,400,000	1.28	1.70	15,200,000	1.38	1.95
Horseback Riding	14,300,000	1.23	1.66	4,700,000	1.28	1.82
Primitive Camping	28,000,000	1.04	1.10	8,000,000	1.01	1.02
Developed Camping	41,500,000	1.19	1.49	10,700,000	1.34	1.97
Swimming (non-pool)	78,100,000	1.21	1.58	23,300,000	1.27	1.64
Family Gathering	123,800,000	1.24	1.57	37,000,000	1.34	1.76
Picnicking	98,300,000	1.25	1.54	27,400,000	1.38	1.80
Sightseeing	113,400,000	1.32	1.71	33,900,000	1.43	1.96
Visiting Historic Places	88,400,000	1.32	1.76	26,900,000	1.48	2.09
Population Growth Index		1.22	1.44		1.27	1.53

\* Kayaking is a fast growing sport, but was not included in the Forest Service survey.

Source: Compiled from: Bowker, J., English, D., and Cordell, K (1995) Projections of Outdoor Recreation Participation to 2050. USDA Forest Service, Athens, GA.

Physical Activities. The largest number of outdoor recreation activities involves physical activity and close interaction with the environment. This is significant for the future of the corridor in that environmental awareness and stewardship is a major impetus for developing the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Establishing a Birding-Related Business: A Resource Guide. Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A&M University. (2002).

In the South Region, biking is projected to grow by 38% by 2020 and almost double by 2050, making it the fastest growing outdoor physical activity in the South Region. With enhancements to the Mississippi River Trail (MRT), the corridor should be able to significantly participate in biking's growing popularity while also promoting environmental awareness and physical well-being.

Hiking, canoeing, horseback riding, and developed camping are also expected to show strong continued growth for the foreseeable future, with camping in developed sites growing at twice the national average in the South Region. Hiking and rafting are reported to be the top activities of the experienced ecotourist, with 45% and 35% participation, respectively, in their most recent trip.<sup>23</sup> Kayaking was not covered in the U. S. Forest Service projections, however, this relatively inexpensive sport that allows participants to view nature up close is rapidly growing across the country. The number of recreational kayakers reportedly doubled to over ten million between 1998 and 2002 alone.<sup>24</sup> The Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee is fortunate to have an abundance of the natural resources (both land and water) to become a destination for all five of these popular recreational activities.

Fishing. Fishing, while projected to grow at a rate slightly below overall population growth in both the nation and the South Region, will remain strong in the corridor. Given the large existing base of fishing in the corridor, this popular sport has sufficient opportunity to grow. It will be important to maintain the water quality and fish stocks of Reelfoot Lake and the major river systems in the corridor, along with sufficient boat ramps, fishing supply dealers, and guides. Most certainly, the construction of the new spillway at Reelfoot Lake is viewed as a critical element in preserving this unique natural resource as a fishing and recreation asset.

It is noteworthy that Tennessee and the north central states of Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Ohio account for almost 90% of the fishermen at Reelfoot Lake, based on recent TWRA creel surveys (47% from the four north central states). Given that relatively few fishermen from Kentucky and states to the west and south are visiting Reelfoot Lake, it seems plausible to explore ways to expand the reach of Reelfoot's popularity beyond northwest Tennessee and the north central states.

Nationwide, the demand for natural areas where a growing population can enjoy outdoor recreation will increase throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Cordell et al.<sup>25</sup> indicate that congestion, conflicts among different forms of outdoor recreation, and growing concern for our natural resources will increase. These are important factors that both call for the development of the Mississippi River Corridor in Tennessee and help insure its success. Recognizing the growing demand for recreation in the Tennessee and the economic benefits of tourism in

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<sup>23</sup> Wight, P. (1997). Sustainability, Profitability and Ecotourism Markets: What are They and How Do They Relate. Paper presented at EESTI Ökoturism: Pärnu, Estonia. <http://www.ecotourism.ee/oko/wight.html>. Accessed: 5/19/09.

<sup>24</sup> Hurt, H. (July 18, 2004) How do You Like Your Kayaking? Serene, or Wild? The New York Times.

<sup>25</sup> Cordell, H. et al. (1999) Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends, in: Outdoor Recreation in American Life. Sagamore Publishing: Champaign, IL.



economically distressed counties, the state's recreation plan specifically calls for development of outdoor recreation corridors, including The Mississippi River Natural and Recreation Corridor.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The Tennessee State Recreation Plan: 2003-2008. Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.

## CHAPTER V IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter provides an overview of sources of capital funding, marketing strategies, and organizational direction for the Mississippi River Corridor.

### Capital Projects

River Centers. River Center development funds for land acquisition and construction should be from a partnership between non-profit organizations, local governments, State Government, and the Federal government.

A sponsoring entity from these groups could be created by the General Assembly to be the developer of the River Centers, and each partner could agree to provide a level of funding for capital expenses. After construction a private entity could be contracted to operate the facilities or a portion thereof. If necessary, the sponsoring entity could be empowered to issue tax free bonds and tax freezes or tax increment financing for privately developed property at the Center.

If a River Center fulfills the direct mission of a government agency then that agency could operate the facility with private contracts for specialized services such as a full service AAA rated campground/RV Park.

The River Center designs presented in Chapter II would likely yield a cost per square foot range of \$150 to \$200, excluding furnishings and equipment. However, material selection and other factors would influence cost. The costs of land, parking, landscaping, and utility connections would be additional, and these costs could vary widely depending on location and level of quality.

Road Improvements. The Mississippi River Corridor is served by Tennessee's Department of Transportation Region 4 which covers all of west Tennessee. There are two district offices for the Corridor – District 42 in Newbern, which serves Lake, Obion, and Dyer counties; and District 45 in Arlington, which serves Lauderdale, Tipton, and Shelby counties.

The Tennessee Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for federal Fiscal Years 2008-2011 shows a number of funding programs and construction projects in the Corridor. The STIP identifies several specific programs, which can be funding sources for the future:

- Delta Region Projects – projects coordinated with the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), which currently include improvements to U.S. 412, I-69, I-269.
- National Scenic Byways Program – administered by FHWA for routes designated national scenic byways.
- Enhancement Set Aside – includes pedestrian and bike facilities, scenic easement acquisition, and historic highway projects.

- Forest Highway and Public Lands Projects – includes park roads, forest highways, public lands highways and refuge roads.

For the 2008-2011 period Tennessee's STIP has scheduled projects in all Corridor counties with the construction of I-69 having the greatest impact on accessibility to the Corridor's attractions. In addition, TDOT has designated the I-69/U.S. 51 as a "statewide strategic corridor".

With the identification of the Great River Road and the river valley and bluff scenic spurs recommended in this plan, opportunities for priority funding in the next 10 years should be pursued with TDOT and FHWA.

Several projects under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 will be in the Corridor. These projects will repair bridges and resurface several road segments in Obion, Lauderdale, Tipton and Shelby counties.

Projects previously identified by MRC-T for possible ARRA funding are aimed at upgrading county roads to state highways in order to close gaps in the corridor's National Scenic Byway designation, and include the addition of shoulders for the MRT route. These include:

- Upgrading and connecting 15 miles of Hwy. 21/22 in Lake County: \$1,500,000
- Paving and connecting 10 miles of Herring Hill Road in Tipton County: \$3,000,000
- Connecting 10 miles of Hwy. 19 in Lauderdale County: \$1,000,000

Other projects identified by MRC-T for ARRA funding include:

- An engineering study for rebuilding the bridge over the Loosahatchie River in Shelby County: \$500,000
- Construction of a series of boardwalks, foot trails, and pedestrian bridges (totaling 3.3 miles) at Reelfoot Lake: \$4,470,650

Another, longer term enhancement to the Great River Road is the construction of an environmentally sensitive bridge over the Hatchie River between Lauderdale and Tipton Counties, as discussed in Chapter III. If this highway bridge is not feasible, an alternative might be to construct a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the Hatchie. Due to the complex issues with either alternative, cost estimates are not available.

Wayfinding. The wayfinding elements consist of a hierarchy of buildings, architectural gates, interpretative structures, entry landscaping/signs and various roadway signs.

The **Gateway Centers** are buildings located in or near seven of the Corridor's municipalities. Each has direct access to I-69 and U.S. 51 and provides a logical start point for exploring the Corridor.

Each Gateway Center should be a new or existing building, possibly shared with other information providers. The Center should be around 2,500 square feet and contain exhibition

space, meeting space, visitor lounge and information center (brochures, computers and maps). Each Center should be unique, but all seven Centers would have a 3-D relief map of the Corridor and its attractions. The cost of each Center would be about \$250,000 at \$100 per square foot.

The **Gateways** are architectural structures that may be large scale archways over the road leading into the Corridor or a single pole banner at the side of the road. These Gateways communicate entry into a special place. These Gateways can vary considerably in price, but a metal archway as shown previously in Chapter III would cost approximately \$95,000.

The **Corridor Announcement Signs** will be at the side of state and federal roads and positioned upon entering the Corridor or ¼ to ½ mile before exiting from an Interstate route for travel into the Corridor. There are 12 announcement signs that welcome the traveler into Tennessee and 26 (2 at each exit) that tell the traveler to exit from a freeway and proceed to the Gateway Center.

The remaining signs are route markers, directional signs, kiosks, interpretative stands, shelters and overlook areas on roads leading to the Corridor and the Scenic byways within the Corridor.

The ultimate cost of these wayfinding elements is not known at this time, and the expense will be approved and shared by the different levels of government and special interest organizations.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation is currently doing a study of scenic byways to determine ways to promote these routes including the Great River Road. This study will identify uniform wayfinding elements including information facilities, byway entries and exits, route markers and guide signs throughout the State. The results of this study should be carefully coordinated with recommendations included herein.

### **Corridor Promotion**

The MRCT currently has a robust marketing campaign, which has evolved from its early beginnings to the point now where Corridor plans provide the product for marketing. While many of the planned attractions are not yet in place, the “product” to be advertised is in place with the many historic, natural and recreation attractions in the six county corridor bundled for visitation.

The MRCT has documented its marketing program in the “Corridor Management Plan” presented to FHWA as part of the National Scenic Byway nomination. A new marketing plan should now be prepared and continuously revised as its impact is evaluated and new attractions are added.

The message of the advertising should be – many attractions, one destination, Tennessee's Mississippi Corridor. Directions for visiting the Corridor should be created for half day, full day and over night excursions as suggested by the management plan previously.

The targeted audiences should be identified at the local, regional and national/ international levels. The audiences to target include – individuals and couples, families with children, small groups, schools and tour groups. The audiences should be further targeted based on primary interests – birders, hikers, bicyclists, hunters and nature group members.

The marketing plan would include all of the usual media types plus ads on selected Internet Web sites of the special interest groups being targeted. Some direct mailing could go out in the form of membership solicitations with brochures about different self-directed tours of the Corridor

One of the most effective forms of marketing may be portable displays that could be placed at welcome centers, Gateway Centers, River Centers, retail service providers (motels, outfitters, etc.), and at events like Memphis in May and other festivals in and out of the Corridor. These displays would have the branding logo, eye catching picture or drawing such as a map of the Corridor. Brochures and maps would be part of the display for people to take home.

The following suggestions are based on the findings of our market analysis and could be incorporated into the corridor's marketing strategies.

Geographic Markets. Memphis is, of course, the largest city in the corridor's local market area and can be expected to provide the largest number of visitors to the corridor. However, marketing efforts may be necessary in order to gain maximum participation in corridor travel as many Memphians are more oriented toward the Tennessee River (Pickwick Lake) or sites in Arkansas or Mississippi for weekend outdoor recreation.

Within the one half day drive market (50 to 250 miles), St Louis is the closest large metro area and, with a population of 2.8 million, offers tremendous visitor potential. Another opportunity within the half day drive radius might include targeting existing visitors to Land Between the Lakes, where almost one million outdoor enthusiasts visit each year.

The ring of states within a one day drive (250 to 500 miles) includes places where significant numbers of leisure tourists are already visiting attractions within the corridor. These include Reelfoot Lake (Illinois, Missouri, and Ohio) and Memphis (east Texas). Travelers in these states can be encouraged to extend their visits to west Tennessee by spending additional days enjoying a diversity of attractions throughout the corridor.

Opportunities to increase tourism in the corridor will be created by the designation of the Great River Road in all states of the lower Mississippi River. Coordinated promotional efforts by these states can increase overall GRR visitation. In particular, joint efforts by Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Missouri can create a GRR loop through all four states. Route segments in these four states are in close proximity and have multiple points for



crossing the Mississippi River, including Memphis, Dyersburg, and the ferry crossing between Missouri and Kentucky. Within Tennessee and Kentucky a similar loop route could be developed that includes the Tennessee River/Kentucky Lake corridor from LBL to I-40, and the Mississippi River Corridor from Memphis back up to Kentucky and LBL.

Specific Outdoor Recreation Activities. Several outdoor activities that are growing in popularity and currently exist in the corridor were identified in Chapter IV. Marketing the corridor through national organizations such as the Audubon Society, clubs, tour groups, schools, specialty retailers/outfitters, and other recreational interest groups can spread the word to those with specific recreational or educational interests.

Activities that may warrant these promotional efforts include:

- Visiting historic places
- Sightseeing
- Wildlife viewing
- Birding
- Hiking
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Biking
- Horseback riding
- Developed camping
- Fishing
- Civil War enthusiasts
- African-American heritage tourism
- Music heritage tourism

## **Organizational Structure**

Tennessee's Mississippi River Corridor consists of six counties. Within these counties are various public and private interests who work independently or cooperatively to further the vision/mission of each interest. There are the governments – county, municipal, Tennessee and the United States. The governments have agencies with an interest in serving some part of the Corridor. There are businesses and business groups – Chambers of Commerce, farmers, retail merchants, and wholesale/manufacturing plants. Each is looking to maximize markets and attract a competitive workforce.

There are non-profit organizations – the Audubon Society, Mississippi River Trail, Inc., Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation, Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area, Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy of Tennessee, Tennessee Conservation League, and the Wolf River Conservancy among others at local, regional, state and national levels. These organizations pursue independent but overlapping agendas that benefit the corridor.

There are regional government sponsored organizations. The largest of these is the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), which was created by Congress to oversee economic

development in eight states (252 counties) in the lower Mississippi River valley. In Tennessee all of west Tennessee's counties are included. The DRA has funding for various projects in the region and can use the funds as direct investments or as leverage for federal and state programs.

The DRA provides assistance to Local Development Districts. Two of these districts provide planning and assistance to Corridor counties – the Northwest Tennessee Development District in Martin, which covers Obion, Lake and Dyer counties; and the Memphis Area Association of Governments, which covers Shelby, Tipton and Lauderdale counties.

One of the economic development initiatives of DRA and the Local Development Districts is called “quality of place”, which focuses on downtown revitalization, protection of environmental assets, and the development and marketing of local entertainment, recreation, cultural and tourism assets.

Another major regional organization is the 10-state Mississippi River Parkway Commission, which coordinates and promotes the Great River Road.

Finally, the Lower Mississippi Conservation Committee is a collaboration of federal and state agencies. In Tennessee the state agencies are – Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, West Tennessee River Basin Authority, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. Private organizations include Ducks Unlimited and the Nature Conservancy. Federal agencies include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The organization that has the broadest vision with a focus only on the Corridor is the Mississippi River Corridor-Tennessee, Inc. This report is one of a continuing series of plans to make the Corridor a national and international destination – many attractions, one destination.

The diverse interests that comprise the Corridor's decision-makers have an umbrella organization for all interests in order to maximize the potentials in environmental development. The MRCT is that organization.

At present the MRCT has a Board of Directors with 18 members, who represent local government, businesses and State government. There is an Advisory Council representing State and federal agencies, businesses, non-profit organizations, and a State Senator.

Task Force Committees have been established in each county within the Corridor and these committees have been the backbone of the organization with their chairpersons serving on the Board of Directors. These committees have been instrumental in developing data and strategic goals for the long-range policies for the Corridor. A review of representation on the Board of Directors, Advisory Board and Task Force Committees should look at other stakeholders who might be added.

Consideration should be given to the creation of a separate “Development Corporation” for specific projects such as the River Centers and Gateway Centers and other facilities that could be outside the direct responsibility of existing agencies and organizations.

### **Next Steps**

The following items should be considered as “next steps” in the development of the Mississippi River Corridor.

1. Present the findings of this and other studies to the six county task forces.
2. In conjunction with other stakeholders, determine who will be the developers of the River Centers and Gateway Centers.
3. Study the feasibility of a development corporation to build and manage the River Centers
4. Develop a five to ten year road improvement program identifying specific road improvements that are needed to enhance the three routes, and identify funding sources.
5. Develop a detailed marketing plan focusing on specific target markets.
6. Explore coordinated promotional efforts with other GRR states along the lower Mississippi River.
7. Inventory and assess the quality and distribution of tourism related businesses – lodging, restaurants, outfitters, recreational enterprises, purveyors of local products, etc. – and determine gaps in tourism services.
8. Determine potential blueway routes for all rivers in the corridor, with attention to all types of watercraft, including larger tour boats for the Mississippi River.

## **Appendix**



Table A - 1  
Mississippi River Corridor Assets

ID No.	Asset Name	Theme	Rating	Orientatio	Latitude	Longitude	County
1	Jolly's Landing Overlook	Experiencing the River	2	River	36.485707	-89.499603	Lake
2	Fishgap Hill Overlook	Experiencing the River	2	River	36.484170	-89.286940	Obion
3	Pea Ridge Overlook	Experiencing the River	2	River	36.468749	-89.511903	Lake
4	Marijac Memorial River Park	Experiencing the River	2	River	36.367205	-89.504617	Lake
5	Fritz Landing Overlook	Experiencing the River	2	River	36.236110	-89.601110	Lake
6	Ford's Landing Overlook	Experiencing the River	3	River	36.110572	-89.611823	Dyer
7	Heloise Overlook	Experiencing the River	1	River	36.046390	-89.677220	Dyer
8	Porter Gap	Experiencing the River	2	River	35.915280	-89.497220	Lauderdale
9	Hales Point Overlook	Experiencing the River	2	River	35.910000	-89.626940	Lauderdale
10	Arp Overlook	Experiencing the River	2	River	35.773330	-89.602500	Lauderdale
11	TN Highway 19 Switchback Overlook	Experiencing the River	2	River	35.772317	-89.650817	Lauderdale
12	Fulton Port Overlook	Experiencing the River	1	River	35.720420	-89.883029	Lauderdale
13	Millstone Mountain	Experiencing the River	3	River	35.628890	-89.691390	Tipton
14	Chickasaw Bluff No. 1	Experiencing the River	1	River	35.625830	-89.865830	Lauderdale
15	Chickasaw Bluff No. 2	Experiencing the River	1	River	35.508890	-89.910560	Tipton
16	Chickasaw Bluff No. 3	Experiencing the River	1	River	35.320000	-90.060000	Shelby
17	Chickasaw Bluff No. 4	Experiencing the River	1	Settlement	35.147500	-90.055560	Shelby
18	Ashburn-Coppock Park Overlook	Experiencing the River	3	Settlement	35.131110	-90.067220	Shelby
19	Martys Park	Experiencing the River	3	Settlement	35.128662	-90.070599	Shelby
20	Crump Park Overlook	Experiencing the River	3	Settlement	35.124720	-90.074720	Shelby
1	Discovery Park	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	1	Settlement	36.437516	-89.069358	Obion
2	Railroad Park	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.425556	-89.044472	Obion
3	Dixie Gun Works/Old Car Museum	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.414149	-89.075591	Obion
4	Flippen's Fruit Farm	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	River	36.390305	-89.292817	Obion
5	Bunch's Grocery/Samburg Motel	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.381896	-89.358401	Obion
6	Samburg (town)	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.380830	-89.354720	Obion
7	Talley Cafe	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.378529	-89.485483	Lake
8	Tiptonville (town)	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.378330	-89.471940	Lake
9	Carl Lee Perkins Boyhood Home	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.371908	-89.467733	Lake
10	Boyette's Resort and Restaurant	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.361100	-89.433100	Lake
11	Wynsburg (town)	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.328610	-89.473330	Lake
12	Ridgely (town)	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.263330	-89.487780	Lake
13	Lenox	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.089170	-89.498330	Dyer
14	Finley (town)	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	36.035830	-89.479720	Dyer
15	Veteran's Museum	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	35.896369	-89.412194	Lauderdale
16	Murray Hudson Antiquarian Shop	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	35.874700	-89.396000	Lauderdale
17	Moore's Grocery	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	River	35.847400	-89.533400	Lauderdale
18	Fullen's Grocery and Cotton Gin	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	3	River	35.759812	-89.785760	Lauderdale
19	Lauderdale Tomato Festival	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	1	Settlement	35.745310	-89.530175	Lauderdale
20	Ripley (town & county seat)	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	1	Settlement	35.745280	-89.529720	Lauderdale
21	Ripley (town & county seat)	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	35.745280	-89.529720	Lauderdale
22	W. G. L. Rice Memorial Park	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	3	Settlement	35.732300	-89.532300	Lauderdale
23	Fort Prudhomme Site	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	1	River	35.609468	-89.882994	Lauderdale
24	Gus's Famous Fried Chicken	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	35.564566	-89.646695	Tipton
25	Gilt Edge CafT	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	3	Settlement	35.550617	-89.824883	Tipton
26	Randolph	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	1	Settlement	35.516390	-89.888610	Tipton
27	Turnage Grocery	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	3	Settlement	35.514933	-89.877933	Tipton
28	Jones Orchard	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	3	River	35.321000	-89.930900	Shelby
29	Old Millington Winery	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	3	Settlement	35.308000	-89.953000	Shelby
30	Cordova Cellars Winery	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	3	River	35.161800	-89.761300	Shelby
31	Mud Island Park/Mississippi River Museum	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	1	Settlement	35.150000	-90.058330	Shelby
32	Cobblestone Landing	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	2	Settlement	35.144675	-90.056399	Shelby
33	Memphis Riverboats	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	1	Settlement	35.144387	-90.057035	Shelby
34	Cotton Museum / Memphis Cotton Exchange	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	1	Settlement	35.143200	-90.054700	Shelby
35	Peabody Hotel	Living with the River: Commerce and Culture	1	Settlement	35.142354	-90.051876	Shelby

ID No.	Asset Name	Theme	Rating	Orientation	Latitude	Longitude	County
3	Central Elementary School	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.428750	-89.051917	Obion
4	Houser House	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.428361	-89.071333	Obion
5	East Main Street and Exchange Street Historic District	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.426833	-89.053667	Obion
6	Union City Armory	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.426361	-89.060556	Obion
7	Washington Avenue and Florida Avenue Historic District	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.426139	-89.061667	Obion
8	Deering Building	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.425778	-89.056750	Obion
9	Capitol Theatre	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.425333	-89.056750	Obion
10	Caldwell Lustron House	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.423889	-89.046444	Obion
11	Obion County Courthouse	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.423060	-89.059170	Obion
12	US Post Office	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.422778	-89.058000	Obion
13	Bill Nations Camp Motor Court	Southern Heritage and Architecture	3	Settlement	36.379775	-89.358268	Obion
14	Lake County Courthouse	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.378060	-89.483890	Lake
15	Caldwell-Hopson House	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.376083	-89.480556	Lake
16	Trimble Covered Bridge (Emerson E. Parks Covered Bridge)	Southern Heritage and Architecture	3	Settlement	36.204998	-89.191169	Obion
17	Mississippi River Bridge	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	River	36.115531	-89.613084	Dyer
18	Troy Avenue Historic District	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.045139	-89.384528	Dyer
19	Latta House	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.042028	-89.385056	Dyer
20	Gordon--Oak Streets Historic District	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.040364	-89.382731	Dyer
21	Edward Moody King House	Southern Heritage and Architecture	3	Settlement	36.033800	-89.391100	Dyer
22	Dyersburg Courthouse Square Historic District	Southern Heritage and Architecture	1	Settlement	36.033583	-89.387639	Dyer
23	Bank of Dyersburg	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	36.032722	-89.385278	Dyer
24	Lauderdale County Courthouse	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.745830	-89.530560	Lauderdale
25	U.S. Post Office	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.745000	-89.527472	Lauderdale
26	Wardlaw-Steele House	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.742000	-89.533028	Lauderdale
27	Hotel Lindo	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.564667	-89.646778	Tipton
28	Coca-Cola Bottling Plant	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.564250	-89.649639	Tipton
29	Covington Court Square	Southern Heritage and Architecture	1	Settlement	35.564170	-89.646390	Tipton
30	St. Matthew's Episcopal Church	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.562780	-89.648330	Tipton
31	South College Street Historic District	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.562639	-89.648806	Tipton
32	Ruffin Theatre	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.561972	-89.647250	Tipton
33	South Main Street Historic District	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.558670	-89.645833	Tipton
34	Mt. Carmel Presbyterian Church	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.496940	-89.648060	Tipton
35	Trinity Church	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.455830	-89.518330	Tipton
36	Rhodes House (Lara Wright House)	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.446144	-89.640243	Tipton
37	Trinity Episcopal Church	Southern Heritage and Architecture	3	Settlement	35.412778	-89.534556	Tipton
38	Victorian Village	Southern Heritage and Architecture	3	Settlement	35.145096	-90.038075	Shelby
39	Orpheum Theatre	Southern Heritage and Architecture	2	Settlement	35.139933	-90.055250	Shelby
1	Island No. 10 Battlefield Site	The Civil War and its Aftermath	1	River	36.448309	-89.470269	Lake
2	Jones Chapel Church of Christ and Cemetery	The Civil War and its Aftermath	1	River	36.433000	-89.478000	Lake
3	Confederate Monument	The Civil War and its Aftermath	2	Settlement	36.420500	-89.047361	Obion
4	Fort Pillow State Historic Park	The Civil War and its Aftermath	1	River	35.636670	-89.840000	Lauderdale
5	Ft. Wright	The Civil War and its Aftermath	1	River	35.521233	-89.887017	Tipton
6	Jefferson Davis Park	The Civil War and its Aftermath	3	Settlement	35.147220	-90.055000	Shelby
7	Confederate Park	The Civil War and its Aftermath	3	Settlement	35.146940	-90.053890	Shelby
8	Hunt-Phelan House	The Civil War and its Aftermath	2	Settlement	35.137567	-90.043500	Shelby
1	Brown Chapel American Methodist Episcopal Church	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	36.428714	-89.048237	Obion
2	Mt. Zion Colored Methodist Episcopal Church	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	36.428250	-89.044456	Obion
3	Rock of Ages CME Church	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	36.378200	-89.473600	Lake
4	Dickey's Octagonal Barbershop	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	36.359528	-89.049222	Obion
5	Ridgely Rosenwald School (c. 1925)	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	36.271110	-89.486110	Lake
6	Bethlehem Goldust Baptist Church & Cemetery	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	River	35.711110	-89.859440	Lauderdale
7	Saint James CME Church and Cemetery	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	River	35.693877	-89.693058	Lauderdale
8	Choctaw Village	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	35.679393	-89.585273	Lauderdale
9	Alex Haley State Historic Site (W.E. Palmer House)	The Struggle for Civil Rights	1	Settlement	35.673300	-89.576600	Lauderdale
10	Canaan Baptist Church	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	35.559611	-89.638889	Tipton

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38	Victorian Village	Southern Heritage and Architecture	3	Settlement	35.145096	-90.038075	Shelby
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4	Fort Pillow State Historic Park	The Civil War and its Aftermath	1	River	35.636670	-89.840000	Lauderdale
5	Ft. Wright	The Civil War and its Aftermath	1	River	35.521233	-89.887017	Tipton
6	Jefferson Davis Park	The Civil War and its Aftermath	3	Settlement	35.147220	-90.055000	Shelby
7	Confederate Park	The Civil War and its Aftermath	3	Settlement	35.146940	-90.053890	Shelby
8	Hunt-Phelan House	The Civil War and its Aftermath	2	Settlement	35.137567	-90.043500	Shelby
1	Brown Chapel American Methodist Episcopal Church	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	36.428714	-89.048237	Obion
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11	Jamestown	The Struggle for Civil Rights	1	Settlement	35.551448	-89.862675	Tipton
12	St. Paul Rosenwald School	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	35.518188	-89.888375	Tipton
13	Slave Haven Museum/Burkle Estate	The Struggle for Civil Rights	2	Settlement	35.164482	-90.043691	Shelby
14	Robert Church Park	The Struggle for Civil Rights	3	Settlement	35.139100	-90.048263	Shelby
15	National Civil Rights Museum	The Struggle for Civil Rights	1	Settlement	35.134067	-90.058250	Shelby