

# Jekyll Island

GEORGIA'S JEWEL



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## Visitation Analysis Presented to Jekyll Island Authority

Jekyll Island, Ga. (September 15, 2008) – As revitalization of Jekyll Island progresses, an independent visitation analysis was presented to the Jekyll Island Authority board by consultant Ken Bleakly at its regular meeting on Monday. The purpose of the study is to provide the Jekyll Island Authority with a better understanding of the cumulative effects of future revitalization on the island's infrastructure and environmental resources. In addition, the study offers a forecasting tool that gives clear estimates of how revitalization projects will benefit visitation and revenues.

The Bleakly Advisory Group project team, which includes engineering firm Thomas & Hutton and land planner Cooper Carry, utilized a number of factors to determine historic visitation of Jekyll Island, including wastewater treatment volume, traffic counts, parking fee revenue, golf rounds, and hotel room nights. The study shows a slow but steady decline in visitation to the island since the early 1990s.

"Ken Bleakly and his team have presented us with a thorough and objective modeling analysis that will guide us as we move forward with revitalization," said Jones Hooks, executive director of the Jekyll Island Authority. "It is obvious that fewer Georgians are visiting Jekyll Island, but the good news is that we can bring them back through a strategic revitalization plan that doesn't require major infrastructure changes."

The study also provides a number of forecasts based on varying redevelopment density scenarios as defined by Cooper Carry and carried forward from the Jekyll Island Master Plan. The initial projection shows that financial sustainability can be achieved under a low-to-medium density scenario.

Other key findings from the study:

- Visitation peaked at an estimated 2.1 million visitors in 1989-1990 and totaled approximately 1.49 million visitors in fiscal year 2008.
- Jekyll Island can be financially sustained by reaching approximately 2.65 million annual visitors. According to the study, achieving this level of visitation will:
  - Support operating costs and correct deferred maintenance;
  - Pay for needed long-range capital improvements and enhanced visitor amenities;
  - Increase visitation by approximately 21 percent (by 2023) over historical peak visitation during 1989-90;

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- Homeownership on Jekyll Island is primarily characterized as an investment property or second home, with 67 percent of owners from 35 states other than Georgia and Canada. Home rental accounts for 9 percent of lodging revenue for the island.
- Future development only affects 6 percent of the island, and all development is within the 35 percent of the island that is developable as outlined by state law.

In addition to the visitation analysis, the Jekyll Island Authority board has initiated several other policy measures to protect the island's habitats, resources and character as revitalization continues. An ordinance passed this summer defined appropriate beachfront lighting practices to protect the island's endangered sea turtle habitat from light pollution. The Authority expects to adopt new design guidelines articulating standards for all building and landscaping in order to maintain Jekyll Island's unique character. The design guidelines include height restrictions that limit building height to what currently exists in the Jekyll Island Historic District. New conservation guidelines to protect Jekyll Island's natural resources are currently under final legal review and should be adopted soon. A rebranding effort is also underway that will reflect a revitalized Jekyll island and encourage more Georgians to visit.

"People love Jekyll Island because it is a sanctuary and a retreat with the right balance of nature and amenities," said Eric Garvey, the Authority's senior director of marketing. "Revitalization will enhance that, and therefore we want to focus our message on this key feature. Our goal is simple: to bring more Georgians to Jekyll."

A public presentation of the visitation analysis will be held Monday, September 29 at 2 p.m. at the Jekyll Island Convention Center.

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### **About Jekyll Island**

Jekyll Island is a barrier island on Georgia's coast – midway between Jacksonville, Fla. And Savannah, Ga. Accessible by car just minutes from I-95, Jekyll Island offers a variety of amenities, including 10 miles of beach, four golf courses, a 250-acre Historic Landmark District, water park, tennis center, an array of lodging options including hotels, cottages and campgrounds. Owned by the State of Georgia, and managed by the Jekyll Island State Park Authority, Jekyll Island has had development limited to just 35 percent of its available land area. This unique aspect of Jekyll Island serves to preserve the critical barrier island ecosystem, and provide guests with a unique escape from the crowds and complications of other beach resort destinations. The Jekyll Island Foundation is a public 501 (c) 3 organization which operates exclusively for charitable and educational purposes to support the work of the Jekyll Island Authority by assisting in the preservation, conservation and appreciation of Jekyll Island. Please visit [www.jekyllisland.com](http://www.jekyllisland.com) for more information or call 1-877-4JEKYLL.

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