

# SUCCESS STORY

Photo by William Bishop

## DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA

Dominated by granite outcrops, the **Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area** (AMNHA) offers visitors heart-pumping recreation, pastoral landscapes, rare ecology and compelling history. These experiences combine to form an unparalleled attraction for travelers, adventure seekers and history enthusiasts traveling in Georgia. To enhance the quality of these experiences, the AMNHA is currently implementing a professionally-designed, comprehensive signage program that captures and shares the National Heritage Area's unique history, **welcomes and directs visitors** to venues of historical and natural importance, and **highlights gateways to recreational activities**. This system of signs increases visibility of the area, helps visitors navigate to different heritage and eco-tourism sites and enhances their experience, thereby encouraging them to extend their stay or return to the area.

The project is led by the non-profit Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance along with the support of DeKalb County Commissioners. The Alliance commissioned design concepts for a comprehensive program of coordinated wayfinding and interpretive signs for sites in the National Heritage Area ranging from the Arabia Mountain PATH (AMP) trailheads to gateways including Vaughters' Farm, Flat Rock Archives and the



City of Lithonia. The first major construction project was completed at the historic Vaughters' Farm gateway in fall 2017, and roadside and trailhead signs were completed in spring 2018. The construction of two additional gateways and enhancing signage at the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve are currently underway. When fully implemented, this professionally-designed signage program will increase visibility of the area, and enhance experiences of thousands of tourists, adventure seekers and history enthusiasts visiting the AMNHA.

Partners collaborating with the Alliance on this signage project include DeKalb County, City of Lithonia, Signature Design, and Hanson Aggregates Southeast which donated a portion of the granite materials for the gateway structures and entrance signs. The project would not be possible without support from DeKalb County and District 5 Commissioner Mereda Davis Johnson who introduced a resolution to secure funding of approximately \$563,000 through hotel/motel tax funds dedicated to capital projects.

Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area is a tourism partner to Discover DeKalb Convention & Visitors Bureau. Both organizations work collaboratively to favorably impact the economy of the region. DeKalb County, Georgia is Georgia's third-largest county with over eleven cities, communities and unique neighborhoods.



## IMPACT STATEMENT

Economic development studies show that heritage tourists seek unique, authentic experiences and have a significantly greater per-trip economic impact. Overall, they stay longer, visit more sites, and spend more money per day than general tourists. The Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area draws more than 100,000 visitors annually. The impact of the nation's 49 National Heritage Areas to local economies is significant. A 2012 report shows that these public-private partnerships can generate substantial revenue in support of local businesses and taxes. NHAs directly and indirectly generate \$12.9 billion per year in the U.S., create and support 148,000 jobs, and \$1.2 billion in tax revenue.