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## **CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND**

**PRESS RELEASE:**  
For immediate release

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### **Tybee Named Better Home Town**

Tybee Island, GA – (June 18, 2010) The City of Tybee Island, Georgia, is extremely pleased to announce the designation of Tybee Island as a Better Home Town Community under the Georgia Main Street Program.

The National Main Street Center, working with development authorities around the country, has put together a Four Point Approach to put a more disciplined approach to downtown development and growth. Georgia's Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Office of Downtown Development (ODD) coordinates three population-based programs designed to support the growth and development of Georgia's downtowns. The Better Hometown program supports communities with populations of less than 5,000. The Georgia Main Street program supports communities with populations of 5,000-50,000. Introduced in May 2007, the Urban Main Street City program supports communities with populations greater than 50,000.

The Main Street program uses a comprehensive revitalization process originated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 1980, Georgia became one of six pilot states to launch a statewide Main Street program of downtown economic development. Its comprehensive approach seeks to integrate a locally-driven management strategy with a focus on the physical improvement of buildings and public spaces, aggressive promotion and image building and economic development of the downtown area.

To qualify as a Better Hometown, a comprehensive program comprised of the elements of: organization and outreach, promotion, design, and economic restructuring must be initiated. Standards of performance against a list of principles must be met and documented in order to receive this designation. Tybee Island first began this process with the creation of a Downtown Development Authority which eventually was replaced in July 2008 with the hiring of Chantel Morton to coordinate the Better Hometown Initiative. Tybee Island was accepted as an applicant to the program in December of that year, and efforts have since been under the purview of the Better Home Town Board of Directors, chartered by the City Council to bring this process to fruition.

A statement from the DCA noted, "The state Main Street program is delighted to welcome Tybee Island into our program. The city has demonstrated that they understand Main Street principles, and their board and volunteers are doing an outstanding job in supporting small businesses and job creation in the community."

Tybee Mayor Jason Buelterman was enthusiastic about achieving Better Home Town status. "This is a wonderful distinction for our community and a testament to the hard work and dedication of many Tybee volunteers and City staff members. We look forward to continuing our work as we strive to become a more favorable climate in which to live and operate businesses."

"I am extremely proud to have the opportunity to work with the City of Tybee, business owners and residents who have joined together to make becoming a Better Hometown Community a reality," Ms. Morton said after receiving notification of acceptance. "The volunteer attitude on the Island is truly amazing, and the efforts to

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work as a team continue to prove successful! Receiving the designation is validation of the work by many to maintain the quality of life through a healthy business corridor and to enhance the cultural experience while preserving this barrier island's heritage."

The mission of the Tybee Island Better Hometown Program is to:

- facilitate efforts to revitalize, redevelop and enhance the business corridor;
- create a sense of place and improve the quality of life for residents, business owners and visitors using the Main Street Four Point Approach;
- encourage quality economic growth and development while preserving Tybee Island's unique architectural heritage;
- support and encourage the arts as a cultural endeavor and economic engine on the Island.

*About Tybee Island, GA.: The City of Tybee Island, Georgia is on the outermost barrier island off the Savannah area coast. With a wild bird sanctuary, over three miles of ocean beaches, and salt marshes on the back river, outdoor recreation activities abound for visitors to the island. As a key defense point to the important Savannah port, Tybee's Fort Screven, Tybee Post Theater, Fort Pulaski, and the Tybee Island and Cockspur Lighthouses combine with the unique architectures of the island's raised cottages to form a rich backdrop for history buffs. Attracting a strong artistic community, there are several local supporting art galleries. Keeping the island interesting year round are several arts festivals, the Annual Pirate Fest, the Beach Bum Parade, St Patrick's Day celebrations, the Hot Rod Run, the Beach Bash, and the Christmas Parade, as well as fireworks displays on Independence and New Year's Days off the Walter W. Parker Pier and Pavilion. The Marine Science Center cooperates with Georgia's DNR to protect threatened sea turtle species by searching for nests, protecting their eggs, and making sure hatchlings make it to sea. For visitor information, stop by <http://www.tybeevisit.com/>, and to find more about the City of Tybee Island, visit our web site at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/>.*

*About Tybee Island's Better Hometown Initiative: Tybee's Better Hometown initiative follows a comprehensive revitalization process that improves all aspects of a commercial district. Better Hometown is a self help approach to economic development for downtown areas designed to grow business and improve a community's quality of life. With broad based community support, it integrates a practical management strategy with the physical improvements of buildings and public spaces, promotion and image building, and economic development in the area. For more information, visit <http://www.cityoftybee.org/BetterHometownProgram.aspx>.*

*About DCA's Office of Downtown Development (ODD): DCA's ODD focuses on economic development through downtown revitalization, historic preservation and restoring a sense of place. The ODD staff manages the nationally recognized Main Street and Better Hometown Program, provides specialized design assistance to communities involved in downtown projects, conducts year-round training sessions and provides a variety of resource materials. The department also offers resources to Georgia's larger communities through its Urban Georgia Network and Urban Main Street Program. These programs assist larger, urban neighborhoods with historic core commercial districts by providing ongoing networking and information sharing opportunities.*

*The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was created in 1977 to serve as an advocate for local governments. As outlined in its mission statement, DCA seeks opportunities that support "partnering with communities to help create a climate of success for Georgia's families and businesses." DCA operates a host of state and federal grant programs; serves as the state's lead agency in housing finance and development; promulgates building codes to be adopted by local governments; provides comprehensive planning, technical and research assistance to local governments; and serves as the lead agency for the state's solid waste reduction efforts. For more information, please visit the DCA website at <http://www.dca.state.ga.us>.*

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