



How the City of Hernando Is Powering Community Engagement and Tourism with WMT Digital



The Challenge: A Growing Community Without a Connected Digital Ecosystem

The City of Hernando, Mississippi sits in one of the fastest-growing counties in the state. While the city has fewer than 20,000 residents, its historic downtown square serves as a gathering place for the broader community and visitors from across the region.

Founded in 1837, Hernando has built a reputation for community-centered events and cultural traditions. Throughout the year, residents and visitors gather for experiences like the Hernando Farmers Market, seasonal music series, and major events such as Dickens of a Christmas and the annual Arts & Crafts Fair.

But despite the strong sense of community and active events calendar, the city lacked a centralized digital platform to promote events, highlight local businesses, and help visitors explore everything Hernando has to offer.

For a small city with a limited staff and budget, managing communication across multiple channels was challenging.

The city also needed a solution that could be implemented and managed by a very small team.

“ We don’t have a big team here. When we started, it was essentially a team of one.”

City leaders saw an opportunity to create a centralized digital hub that could support tourism, promote events, and showcase Hernando’s local businesses and cultural history.

Results:

- 89K+ screenviews (+29% YoY)
- 53k+ Sponsor Impressions
- 50%+ Push Notification Engagement

“ We wanted a way for people to stay informed about what’s happening in the community and help visitors discover more of what Hernando has to offer. Thanks to the expertise of WMT, we have been able to launch an always-on experience that does just that.”



Gia Matheny
Community and Economic Development Director



The Solution: A Digital Hub That Powers Hernando's Community Experiences

Events are a central part of life in Hernando, drawing both residents and visitors to the city's historic town square throughout the year.

The city's farmers market alone hosts 80 vendors and runs for six months each year, making it the largest farmers market in Mississippi. The market regularly features live music, children's programming, health events, and community gatherings, attracting ~100,000 visitors each season..

Other major events include:

- **Dickens of a Christmas** (~15,000 visitors)
- **The Hernando Arts & Crafts Fair** (52 years running with 25,000+ visitors)
- **Seasonal music series** hosted by the local arts council and chamber of commerce

Through the mobile app, residents and visitors can easily discover event schedules, access maps of event areas, and stay informed about what's happening across the city.

The city also uses the app's featured content capabilities to highlight major upcoming events and keep the community engaged throughout the year.

Helping Visitors Explore Hernando

Beyond events, the app helps visitors discover places to shop, eat, and stay throughout the city. As Hernando continues to grow and welcome new businesses and hotels, the city uses the platform to showcase local boutiques, restaurants, and attractions.

Interactive maps allow users to navigate the town square and surrounding areas, helping visitors explore the community more easily during events and everyday visits.

For a small city with limited staff resources, the platform provides an efficient way to keep the community informed while promoting local businesses.

Bringing Hernando's History to Life

Hernando also uses the platform to highlight its historic identity. Located within a federally recognized National Heritage Area, the city has a strong connection to arts, culture, and historic preservation.

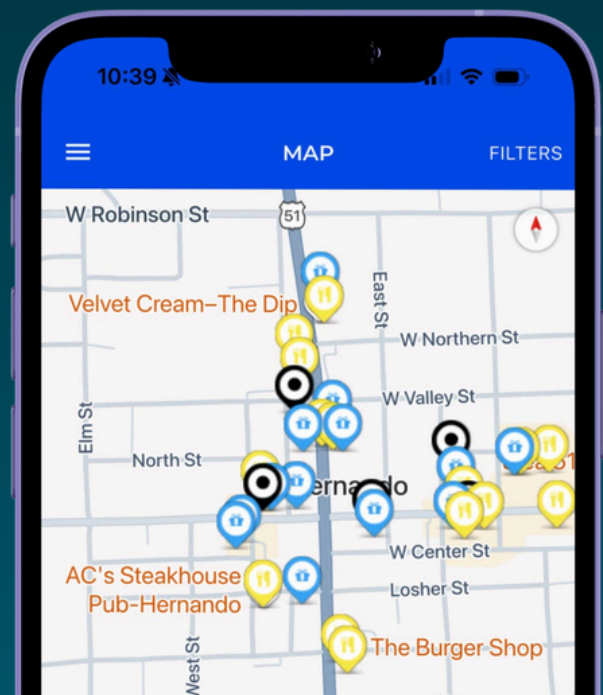
Using the app, Hernando created a digital listing of historic homes included in the state preservation registry. Residents and visitors can explore these landmarks through self-guided walking tours, helping bring the city's history to life.

The feature also supports heritage tourism, a key priority for the city's economic development efforts.

New Value for Sponsors and Community Partners

Hernando can now integrate sponsors directly into the mobile experience, embedding visibility into events, community programming, and activations like giveaways.

This creates meaningful exposure for partners while supporting community initiatives and opening new inventory and engagement opportunities as the platform grows.



Funding the Platform Through Grants and Partnerships

For smaller communities, launching new digital initiatives often requires creative funding strategies. Hernando initially funded the mobile platform through a combination of local support and grant funding tied to tourism and cultural initiatives.

The team secured funding from a local community foundation and successfully wrote a grant demonstrating how the platform would promote heritage tourism and economic development.


These funding sources helped offset the initial cost of launching the app and allowed the city to bring the platform to life without placing additional strain on municipal budgets.

Today, the city continues to explore sponsorship opportunities to support the platform's long-term growth.


The Results

The platform delivered strong results, demonstrating the impact of a connected approach to community engagement and tourism.


Results include:

 **29% YOY growth to 89K+ screenviews in 2025**

reflecting strong engagement with events and local experiences.

 **53K+ sponsor impressions delivered through in-app banner placements**

creating new digital visibility for local partners.

 **50%+ push notification engagement during community activations**

driving strong participation from residents and visitors.

The Takeaway

For cities like Hernando, community events and local traditions play a powerful role in bringing people together.

By investing in a centralized digital platform, the city has created a new way to extend those experiences beyond the town square – helping residents stay informed while making it easier for visitors to explore everything Hernando has to offer.

As the community continues to grow, the platform provides a foundation for deeper engagement with residents, stronger tourism promotion, and new opportunities for local partnerships.

