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Savannah Morning News.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026 | SAVANNAHNOW.COM

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TALL SHIP TRAINING



The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Eagle, known as America's Tall Ship, is moored along the Savannah River Front on May 11.

Coast Guard Cutter Eagle works cadets before departing Savannah



▲ A crew member raises the flag on the Cutter Eagle on May 11. PHOTOS BY RICHARD BURKHART/SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS



▲ The Cutter Eagle prepares to depart from Savannah with a crew of academy cadets.

◀ Coast Guard Academy cadets learn to climb the ropes on the tall ship Eagle before leaving Savannah.



A walking tour group stops in front of the Mercer/Williams House in 2025.

RICHARD BURKHART/SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS

'We're going to have balance'

Mayor reignites push to square tourism with resident concerns

Evan Lasseter

Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Roughly one year ago the City of Savannah instituted a pilot limiting the hours and areas of downtown Savannah walking tours could operate.

This was the latest step in an ongoing discussion in Savannah about how the city can best balance tourism with residential quality of life concerns for downtown residents. That pilot resulted in a memo with a few data points on its findings, but then the broader discussions went mostly silent in the public sphere.

Savannah Mayor Van Johnson has ignited new life into the issue, tasking the city's Tourism Advisory Committee with crafting compromises on measures to find that balance before he submits a plan of his own to city council this summer.

"We're going to have balance. We're going to make balance happen," Johnson said. "They can either work toward that balance or we're going to institute balance."

Johnson sent a letter to TAC, a city-created group of residents and tourism leaders designed to handle tourism-related policy, on April 22 outlining his intent. The letter identifies five broad areas for potential policies he hopes to see addressed.

Areas of concern mentioned in the letter included establishing entertainment districts, a residential designation, mixed-use and commercial

See **TOURISM**, Page 2A

Savannah leaders dish on state of small business

Evan Lasseter

Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Savannah Mayor Van Johnson stood on the stage inside the Savannah Civic Center Ballroom and asked attendees if they had a business card. If so, raise them in the air, he said.

Then he told the room of over 100 small business owners and leaders to exchange cards with someone else. It

was the launch of the 2026 Mayor's Small Business Conference.

Each year small business professionals around Savannah and Chatham County attend the event, which in recent years has been accompanied by a reverse trade show with larger employers, to network and learn about resources for small business growth. The conference is always accompanied by a state of small business discussion, where leaders from varying sectors dis-

cuss the opportunities and challenges facing them.

Here are a few takeaways from this year's state of small business.

Economic growth stronger than projected, opportunities exist

Georgia Southern's Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Economics Michael Toma

See **SMALL BUSINESS**, Page 3A



Georgia Southern's Fuller E. Callaway speaks at the 2026 Mayor's Small Business Conference on May 6.

EVAN LASSETER/SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS

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