Preliminary Market Demand & Feasibility Assessment

Stone Mountain Village Outdoor Performance Venue

Executive conclusion

Preliminary finding: Market support appears MODERATE-TO-STRONG, provided the project is developed as a flexible community/cultural venue rather than primarily as a commercial concert amphitheater.

Stone Mountain itself is a small community—approximately 6,562 residents in 2025—so the facility cannot be justified by resident demand alone. The opportunity instead comes from Stone Mountain's unusual combination of proximity to metropolitan Atlanta, an established tourism draw, an existing arts ecosystem, and the opportunity to create stronger connections between Stone Mountain Park visitation and Stone Mountain Village.

Stone Mountain Park is a 3,200-acre attraction with extensive year-round recreation and seasonal entertainment programming. This creates a visitor base that is disproportionate to the city's resident population. Importantly, however, the Park already provides large-scale entertainment and spectacular programming, including festivals and its signature drone/light shows.

That suggests Stone Mountain Village should not attempt to compete with the Park on scale or spectacle. The opportunity is to provide something fundamentally different: intimate, authentic, culturally oriented programming that encourages residents and visitors to spend additional time in the Town.

Recommended concept: Stone Mountain Cultural Lawn + Pavilion

Rather than a traditional fixed-seat amphitheater, we are recommending for consideration a 2.5–3.5-acre flexible performance park organized around a permanent covered stage/pavilion and landscaped audience lawn.

The sweet spot would be approximately 1,200–1,500 comfortable attendees, expandable to approximately 2,000 for selected events. The estimated size of the stage should be roughly 2,500–3,500 square feet, supported by permanent power, lighting infrastructure, basic backstage facilities, restrooms, possible concessions/food-truck connections, modest storage and with good event-production access.

The defining feature should be flexibility. A 150-person theatrical performance should feel just as appropriate as a 1,500-person concert. This consideration argues strongly against extensive fixed seating.

The venue could support a programming calendar built around Shakespeare/theatre in the park type of events, weekly or biweekly summer concerts, jazz/blues/gospel programming, cultural festivals, movies on the lawn, children's performances, dance, storytelling, holiday events, community celebrations, food-and-music events and occasional ticketed regional performers.

Why the concept fits Stone Mountain

Stone Mountain already has an established cultural foundation through ART Station, which has operated in the Village since 1986 as a multidisciplinary arts organization encompassing theatre, music, dance, visual arts, literary arts, education and community outreach. That is particularly important: a new outdoor venue would not have to create an arts identity from scratch.

There is also precedent specifically for programming like outdoor Shakespeare events. A regional arts and culture planning study for Peachtree Corners identified Shakespeare in the Park as appropriate for an outdoor amphitheater or park setting and specifically identified Atlanta Shakespeare as a potential programming resource.

Tourism opportunities are equally important. The Town is currently pursuing regional tourism collaboration specifically to expand its marketing reach, highlight local attractions and events, and attract visitors into downtown Stone Mountain and surrounding areas. A performance venue could therefore function as tourism infrastructure and downtown economic-development infrastructure, rather than simply a parks amenity.

Competitive environment

There are several relevant precedents around metropolitan Atlanta, but we do not see them as eliminating the opportunity. They actually help define Stone Mountain's market niche.

> **Rainbow Park Amphitheater** in DeKalb County is probably the most relevant capacity comparable. The County currently describes it as a 2,000-person outdoor venue operating approximately April through September and hosting both touring performers and its summer concert series. This demonstrates that a 2,000-person outdoor venue can support meaningful cultural programming within the broader DeKalb market.
>
> **City of Lithonia Amphitheater** provides an even more locally oriented example of a park-based outdoor venue used for community entertainment.

Mable House Barnes Amphitheatre demonstrates another model: a publicly owned cultural venue combining concerts and performing arts with a relaxed, picnic-oriented outdoor experience.

At the larger end, **Chastain Park Amphitheater** illustrates the enduring appeal of an outdoor, park-based concert experience, but at approximately 6,900 seats it operates in a substantially different market position. Similarly, **Stockbridge Amphitheater** is oriented toward larger concert and community-event programming.

The competitive gap therefore appears to be below the major regional amphitheaters and above small community stages—especially for a venue intentionally connected to a walkable historic downtown.

Preliminary demand segmentation

We would anticipate demand coming from four primary markets. Local/community demand could support recurring free concerts, movies, festivals and civic programming. Regional demand from DeKalb County and eastern Metro Atlanta could support stronger concerts, cultural festivals and theatrical productions. Tourism demand represents the differentiator, particularly if events can be packaged with dining, overnight accommodations and Stone Mountain Park visitation. Finally, rental/event demand could include corporate gatherings, nonprofit events, weddings, graduations, private celebrations, and smaller festivals.

A reasonable stabilized programming objective would be approximately 35–50 programmed event days annually, rather than trying to pursue and then having to operate as a high-volume commercial concert venue.

Program	Annual Events	Typical Attendance
Community concert series	8–12	500–1,200
Shakespeare/theatre	6–10	200–600
Regional concerts	4–6	800–2,000
Cultural/food festivals	4–6	750–2,000+
Movies/family programming	6–10	200–750
Holiday/special events	3–5	500–1,500
Private/rental events	8–12	100–750

This could produce roughly 25,000–45,000 annual attendee visits once established. We would treat that as a preliminary planning range rather than a forecast until ticketing, event attendance, tourism visitation and competitive venue data are further analyzed.

Financial feasibility

This is where we would be relatively conservative.

We do not recommend developing the project around the expectation that venue operations alone will generate an attractive financial return. Facilities of this scale frequently have a public-purpose component, particularly when free community programming is part of the mission.

The financial case should instead evaluate a combination of ticket revenue, rentals, sponsorship/naming rights, concessions, food-and-beverage participation, festivals, grants and public support.

More importantly, feasibility should incorporate the venue's district-level economic impact: increased downtown visitation, restaurant spending, longer visitor dwell time, incremental hotel demand, event-related spending and its ability to stimulate adjacent private investment.

That changes the fundamental feasibility question from:

> "Can an amphitheater make money?"
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> to:
>
> "Can a relatively modest investment in cultural infrastructure generate sufficient community, tourism and downtown economic activity to justify its capital and operating requirements?"

For Stone Mountain, we believe the second question has considerably more potential.

Three concepts worth testing

We would test three alternatives before committing to an amphitheater design.

> Concept A — Flexible Cultural Lawn + Pavilion. Approximately 1,500-person planned capacity expandable to 2,000. Permanent covered stage but predominantly lawn seating. Maximum programming flexibility and relatively low capital intensity.
>
> Concept B — Arts + Food + Performance Commons. A smaller 750–1,200-person venue integrated with food trucks, restaurant patios, public art, markets and festival space. This could have greater year-round downtown economic-development value than a standalone amphitheater.
>
> Concept C — Stone Mountain Festival Grounds. Approximately 3–5 acres with a modest permanent stage but infrastructure capable of supporting 2,000+ people for occasional events. Rather than investing heavily in seats and structures, capital goes into power, drainage, lighting, restrooms, landscaping, Wi-Fi, production access and event infrastructure.

A particularly strong programming opportunity

There is an opportunity to build a signature identity around something more distinctive than "concerts in the park."

We would explore a Stone Mountain Summer Arts Festival/Series, potentially anchored by Shakespeare and theatre, but expanded to incorporate music, storytelling, food and multicultural programming.

That aligns especially well with ART Station's existing mission and programming. It also creates a deliberate counterpoint to the large-scale entertainment inside Stone Mountain Park: **Park = spectacle and attractions; Village = culture, food, arts and authentic community experience.**

That distinction could be powerful.

Factor	Assessment
Local resident demand	**Moderate**
Regional market	**Strong**
Tourism market	**Strong**
Existing arts ecosystem	**Strong**
Competitive environment	**Moderate / manageable**
Programming flexibility	**Strong**
Standalone operating profitability	**Moderate–Low**
Downtown economic impact potential	**Strong**
Placemaking value	**Strong**
Overall preliminary feasibility	**MODERATE–STRONG**

Preliminary Recommendation

We would advance the concept to a more formal feasibility phase, but we would change the working description from an amphitheater to something like a "Stone Mountain Cultural Performance & Festival Lawn."

That distinction matters. It keeps the project from becoming an overbuilt 2,000-seat concert facility and instead creates a public space that happens to have excellent performance infrastructure, and the ability to be both a local and a tourism amenity

The next phase should quantify the 15-, 30- and 45-minute drive-time population; competitive venue calendars and utilization; Stone Mountain Park visitor capture potential; ART Station and local programming demand; capital cost; annual operating pro forma; hotel/F&B spending impacts; and three development scenarios at roughly

750, 1,500 and 2,000 capacity. That would allow us to move from this preliminary market assessment to an investment-ready recommendation.

Site Recommendation

For a flexible outdoor performance venue intended to accommodate roughly 100 to 2,000 attendees;

- 2.5- to 4-acre site
- with approximately 1.5 to 2.5 acres devoted to the core performance and audience area.

That scale provides enough room for an intimate Shakespeare-in-the-park setting while also supporting larger concerts and community events without making smaller programs feel lost.

A practical configuration would include;

- a 2,500–4,000 sq. ft. covered or partially covered stage/pavilion,
- approximately 60–80 feet wide and 35–50 feet deep,
- with back-of-house support for performers, storage, loading, and basic production functions.

The audience area should be designed as a flexible lawn or terraced green accommodating approximately 15–20 sq. ft. per person, which translates to roughly 30,000–40,000 sq. ft. for a 2,000-person audience. For Shakespeare, acoustic performances, or smaller community events, the front portion of the lawn could comfortably accommodate 100–500 people while maintaining an intimate relationship with the stage.

We would size the overall site approximately as follows:

Stage + backstage/support: 8,000–15,000 sq. ft.

Audience lawn / seating: 30,000–45,000 sq. ft.

Circulation, concessions, restrooms, gathering areas: 25,000–40,000 sq. ft.

Landscape buffers, service access, flexibility: 30,000–60,000 sq. ft.

Total venue footprint: approximately 2.5–4 acres, excluding dedicated parking

For the programming you describe, I would lean toward a 3-acre venue planned around a 1,500–2,000-person maximum capacity rather than designing a traditional amphitheater exclusively for 2,000 people. A flexible lawn, modest permanent stage, good power and production infrastructure, and movable seating would allow the venue to comfortably “scale down” for a 150-person theatrical performance and “scale up” for a 2,000-person concert.

The most important design consideration is therefore less the maximum capacity than creating multiple audience zones so that a 200-person event still feels intentional and active rather than occurring in an oversized field.