

As a service to our clients and others, we provide occasional conference presentations, research reports, case studies and project reviews on topics of interest which highlight various trends and aspects of our practice. We provide consulting services to clients in the areas of project and plan concept development, business planning, feasibility evaluation and implementation. We specialize in the fields of visitor attractions and facilities; tourism development; and community planning. We welcome your comments.

HELPING A COMMUNITY TELL ITS HERITAGE STORY

A summary of remarks presented by Mr. Ethan Colaiace, Senior Associate, at the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation & Heritage Partnerships Conference, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, May 3, 2002.

Heritage tourism is a large and fast-growing segment of the tourism industry. Heritage tourism development requires constantly seeking a balance between the development and preservation of historic sites and places as well as between the needs of visitors and the desires of a community. This presentation outlines the stages of developing a heritage tourism strategy, using the Boro of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania and Franklin County as a case study. The Chambersburg Heritage Tourism Plan was prepared in association with Museum Design Associates, Inc. in November 2000 for Downtown Chambersburg, Inc. The Plan was funded in part by the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor and the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources.

Why We Tell the Story

There are a number of goals we seek to accomplish through the heritage planning effort. Below are some of them:

- ◆ Preserve and interpret local history and heritage resources
- ◆ Create links between the past and present
- ◆ Help residents and visitors understand the significance of a community's history

- ◆ Enhance a community's sense of place
- ◆ Link a community's history to that of the wider region or the nation
- ◆ Create economic development opportunities
- ◆ Engage collaboration between actors in preservation and development/ redevelopment efforts

How We Tell the Story

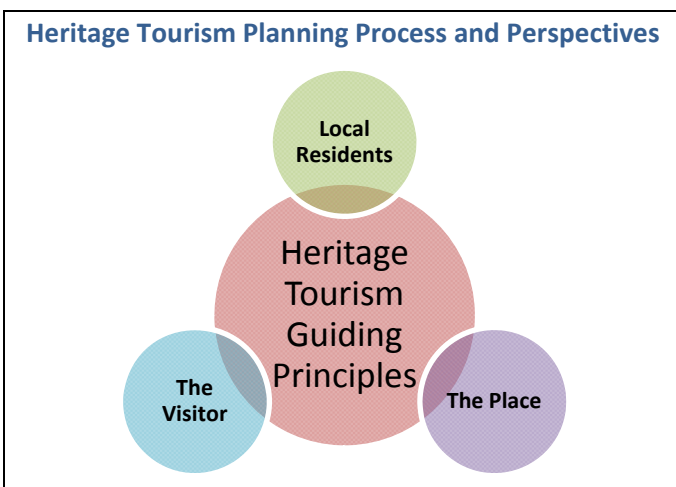
The tourism development strategy is framed within a set of principles that guide the planning effort. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, through its Heritage Tourism Program, has developed a set of guiding principles that we have found useful in guiding the planning process. These five principles are:

- ◆ Focus on authenticity and quality of the experience
- ◆ Preserve and protect resources
- ◆ Make sites come alive
- ◆ Find the fit between a community/region and tourism development
- ◆ Collaborate with local and regional resources

Heritage Tourism Process and Perspectives

The heritage tourism guiding principles reflect on the three main perspectives from which the planning process is approached. Visitors and local residents

often have different, sometimes conflicting, perspectives on tourism development, yet both are key actors in the success of a heritage tourism effort. The place is effectively the stage in which the tourism effort is implemented. The place, whether it is a small downtown or a wide region, needs to have authentic stories and destinations, and the programs implemented in this place must balance economic development and preservations efforts, ideally seeking to find how the two efforts can work together.



Telling the Story of Chambersburg

With the conceptual framework in place, the process of developing the heritage tourism program for Chambersburg and Franklin County. The first task is to assess the existing and potential markets for Chambersburg. The major findings include:

- ◆ Most visitors are from a 500-mile radius
- ◆ Major visitor segments include families on weekend vacations and tour groups
- ◆ A special visitor segment is history and Civil War enthusiasts
- ◆ Potential markets include spillover tourists from Gettysburg National Military Park
- ◆ Gettysburg attracts about 1.7 million visitors annually

- ◆ The story of Gettysburg is closely linked to events in Chambersburg

The second task entails addressing the advantages as well as challenges related to tourism development that should be addressed in the plan.

Advantages include:

- ◆ Heritage tourism is a growing market segment nationally
- ◆ The region offers an array of heritage tourism sites and activities
- ◆ The local setting offers both historic built environments and a pleasing natural setting
- ◆ Good local visitor infrastructure exists, including hotels, restaurants and activities
- ◆ Proximity to Gettysburg, the top visitor destination in the region

Challenges include:

- ◆ Making Chambersburg a destination
- ◆ Lack of an anchor heritage attraction
- ◆ How to tell the many stories of Chambersburg
- ◆ Creating linkages with Gettysburg
- ◆ Accessibility to heritage sites and attractions
- ◆ Effective marketing of area sites and attractions

The third task entails identifying and documenting heritage resources in Chambersburg and Franklin County as part of the process of developing the main stories and themes to be interpreted as part of the heritage tourism plan. The resource inventory process includes the following tasks:

- ◆ Engage local interest groups to identify authentic and significant sites and stories

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- ◆ Document and inventory authentic heritage resources
- ◆ Play the role of the visitor. From this viewpoint, we ask a number of questions about the overall quality of the heritage tourism experience.
 - are heritage resources accessible?
 - are heritage resources in need of interpretation?
 - is the resource of interest to the visitor?

From this inventory effort, the story of Chambersburg is developed, to be interpreted through four main themes.

- ◆ Chambersburg at the Crossroads: The Civil War
- ◆ Frontier and Early Settlement
- ◆ Burgs, Boros, Bridges and Barns
- ◆ Transportation and the Lincoln Highway

Heritage Tourism Planning: The Chambersburg Heritage Center

Despite having a number of historic sites and attractions in the local area, Chambersburg lacks an anchor attraction that can serve as a destination point for visitors. The Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Chambersburg, Inc. had envisioned a visitors center located in a historic property on the Boro's central square. Through the Chambersburg Heritage Center, a number of the challenges to tourism development would be addressed, while capitalizing on a number of Chambersburg's advantages. The Chambersburg Heritage Center would support the heritage tourism planning effort by:

- ◆ Serving as the anchor attraction for heritage tourism in Chambersburg
- ◆ Attracting, orienting, informing and dispersing visitors to area sites and attractions
- ◆ Bringing together and interpreting the many

stories of Chambersburg

- ◆ Creating a unified sense of place
- ◆ Helping to market and promote local attractions, businesses and activities
- ◆ Exemplifying adaptive re-use of historic building in central business district

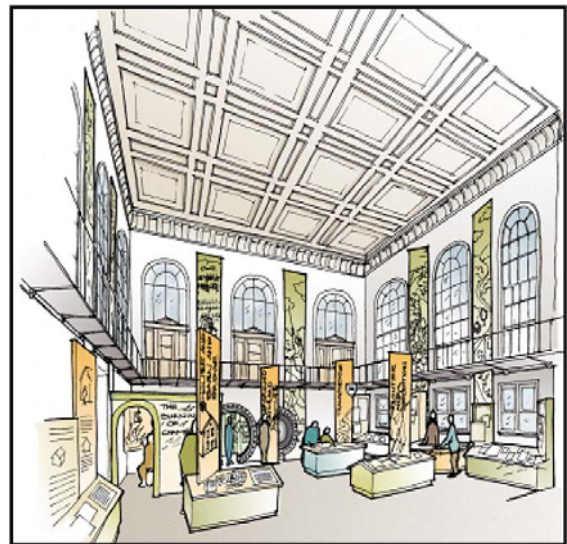


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Heritage Tourism Planning: Chambersburg Heritage Tourism Strategy

While the Chambersburg Heritage Center is a central component of the heritage tourism plan, a comprehensive strategy is developed, which includes:

- ◆ *Comprehensive Interpretive System*, including the Chambersburg Heritage Center and the development of thematically-based maps and brochures
- ◆ *Linkages to historic destinations* through driving and walking tours, as well as historical and interpretive linkages to the Gettysburg story.
- ◆ *Economic Development*, through the development of a visitor services network and community task force, promotion of bed & breakfast development and adaptive re-use of historic properties, and

other marketing and promotion efforts.

- ◆ *Preservation and Stewardship*, through the designation of a formal historic district in Chambersburg and the development of preservation guidelines for the district
- ◆ *Collaborations and Partnerships* with local, county, state and federal agencies and private owners/operators of special resources.



Summary

The example of Chambersburg provides an application of the heritage tourism planning process, summarized here:

Establish guiding principles for planning effort

Focus on the importance of understanding the place itself and its relationship to both local residents and visitors

Assess existing and potential markets

Assess advantages and challenges of heritage planning effort

Develop a resource inventory — identify where the stories can be brought to life

Develop heritage tourism themes — the stories that resonate with local residents and visitors alike

Formulate sustainable heritage tourism strategy with realistic, implementable goals

ConsultEcon, Inc. provides services to clients in the areas of project and plan concept development, evaluation and implementation in the fields of Visitor Attractions, and Travel, Tourism and Resort Development.

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