

Section 8: Strategic Goals and Objectives

Introduction

This Southern Maryland Heritage Area Tourism Management Plan will ultimately include a number of recommended ‘bricks and mortar’ improvements to achieve the primary or overriding goal of the Plan which is to enhance the visitor appeal and enjoyment of the region by enhancing the tourism “product” while increasing economic activity in the region associated with tourism. Such bricks and mortar improvements will likely include the development of gateway facilities to orient visitors, development of additional interpretive facilities to tell the region’s stories, projects designed to enhance linkages among and between heritage attractions that encourage visitors to linger and explore the region’s offerings, among others.

The goals and objectives of this Plan are intended to provide the framework for determining the most appropriate bricks and mortar projects that will best support the goal of enhancing the visitor experience in the region. Equally important, they serve as guideposts to provide long term direction to the entity or entities that will ultimately be charged with managing the wide range of activities associated with the ongoing development of the Southern Maryland Heritage Tourism Program. Although the management plan is essentially a five-year program, the goals and objectives will remain valid and provide guidance beyond that initial period, even as management strategies evolve in response to changing circumstances over time.

The goals and objectives of this plan are proposed within a framework of six major topic areas. Each of these areas represent core components or key elements of successful Heritage Tourism Management Programs. Although no one topic area can be considered of greater importance than another, each has an important, and often mutually supportive, role to play in development of a balanced and comprehensive program strategy.

These six major elements include:

- Interpretation and Education;
- Linkages, Infrastructure and Facility Development;
- Community and Economic Development;
- Preservation and Resource Stewardship;
- Marketing and Outreach; and
- Managing Implementation and Partnerships

Interpretation and Education

Interpretation and education includes projects, programs, and activities designed to enhance understanding and use of the Region and its resources by residents and visitors. A wider range of interpretative and educational offerings strengthen the traditions and authenticity of the region's heritage components, increase knowledge among residents and visitors regarding the various heritage area themes and stories and as such build a broader base of support or constituency for long term protection and careful utilization of heritage resources. Activities related to this topic area focus on working with existing organizations and entities involved in interpretation and education to refine existing venues, programs and/or events to stimulate greater visitation and to extend the benefits of greater visitation in such a way as to reach across borders and provide regional benefits. Development of new interpretive and educational venues to fill gaps in telling the regions's story are also recommended under this topic area.

GOAL 1:

Broaden understanding of Southern Maryland's historical, cultural, natural and recreational attributes through interpretation and education.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Develop a unifying interpretive experience for the region.
- 1.2 Utilize existing and future interpretive venues to enhance or strengthen a clearer "image" of the Southern Maryland Region.
- 1.3 Strengthen the interpretive structure within the region by:
 - identifying resources linked by water transportation;
 - coordinating routes and tours that link elements of the tobacco culture with each other;
 - sharing techniques to promote interpretation of the abundance of historic churches
 - defining and implementing a coordinated approach to interpret the importance of Southern Maryland's military role to the state and the nation.
- 1.4 Evaluate the relative significance of historic resources with state and federal designations as well as the hundreds of listings in the historic inventories to determine how they may be best utilized to foster greater public awareness and understanding of cultural resources.

GOAL 2:

Develop and utilize interpretive and educational venues to enhance visitor experiences and encourage them to extend their stay in the region.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Identify and prioritize additional opportunities to integrate interpretation and experiences associated with natural resources with those of the cultural resources in order to present a “package” to the tourist.
- 2.2 Develop interpretive facilities and events that encourage visitors to travel to heritage sites and facilities located beyond the three leading destinations in the region (Solomons, Waldorf, and Lexington Park) which currently attract over 50% of all visitation to the region.
- 2.3 Create Heritage Tourism products and services that make visitor travel choices easy and interesting.
- 2.4 Organize resources for visitors using interesting themes.
- 2.5 Utilize the region’s natural resources to support outdoor and recreational tourism activities such as canoe trips, kayaking, mountain biking, birdwatching, boating and camping
- 2.6 Increase the number and quality of visitor attractions offered in the region by enhancing existing interpretive venues and developing new facilities to tell the region’s “story”.

GOAL 3:

Enable visitors to have greater understanding of and access to the region’s heritage.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Increase the public’s understanding and use of region and its heritage resources.
- 3.2 Enhance the regional tourism “product” by telling the stories of Southern Maryland’s history and development in more compelling and interesting ways.
- 3.3 Develop a series of interpretive loops that use a variety of transportation modes, including greenways, trails, rivers, and bike/hike trail segments, scenic routes, and water transport where possible to diversify offerings and broaden visitor options.
- 3.4 Develop interpretive programs and materials that can be incorporated into the existing interpretive and educational programs of compatible organization partners and entities.

Linkages, Infrastructure and Facility Development

Infrastructure, linkages, and facility development incorporates the physical support system for the visitor experience. Infrastructure objectives include efforts that will involve direct improvements to preserve and rehabilitate historic resources and associated key settings. Objectives are designed to improve linkages between heritage resources by developing a network of related tour loops. Strategies also include facility development for historical interpretation, visitor and community recreation, and enjoyment of the natural environment. Finally, objectives are designed to assure visitor support services, (visitor orientation facilities, food, accommodation, restrooms, shopping, etc.) continue to evolve in such a way as to enhance the overall quality of the visitor experience in the region.

GOAL 1:

Link small communities, as well as recreational and rural areas possessing heritage resources through use of scenic byways, creek-side drives, trails, and pathways.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Improve opportunities for public access to the water within all three Counties within the region and diversify public opportunities for variety in activities at waterfront locations including beach wading/sunbathing, boating, fossil hunting, canoeing, kayaking, sailboarding, etc..
- 1.2 Develop a “Where Time and Tide Meet” Water Heritage Tour which would link natural and cultural resources in the Heritage Area.

GOAL 2:

Develop a system of “core” tour loops and subordinate tour loops and trails to facilitate visitor orientation and support the heritage experience.

“Core” Heritage Infrastructure - Several Major Routes including the route 210, 301, 2/4 and 5/235 corridors serve as the primary interconnecting spines through the heritage region. They act to link many parts of the heritage region. Initial or “Core” Tour loops should be linked to these corridors to facilitate visitor orientation and access. Signage can be enhanced to provide orientation, facilitate tour route decision-making by residents and visitors alike and to help visitors access tour loops from each corridor and other major routes as may be appropriate. Development of additional heritage tour and trail loops that link major historical, cultural, natural, and recreational venues will also enhance visitor experiences.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Develop additional driving tours or tour loops to augment the three initial driving tours developed to date.
- 2.2 Develop appropriate signage at key locations along major routes to direct residents and visitors to heritage tour route locations.
- 2.3 Construct trails and associated improvements in key locations to diversify modes of transport used to enjoy the regions heritage experience.
- 2.4 Examining opportunities to provide rail or additional trail system access to various portions of the heritage region. These opportunities include use of the rail corridor from Washington D.C. to the Town of Indian Head. Other opportunities to establish a scenic train route in the region should be explored.
- 2.5 Examine opportunities to utilize former rail corridors to expand bike and hiking trail system offerings in the region and provide hiking alternatives paralleling driving tour routes.
- 2.6 Identifying, designating, and providing signage at trailheads along tour routes and other loops to connect foot, bike, horse trails, roads and commuter rail.

GOAL 3: Foster linkages among and between heritage attractions that encourage visitors to explore, linger, and sample the diverse offerings of the Southern Maryland Heritage Region.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Utilize driving tours, tour loops, and trails to organize and link the new and existing interpretive/recreational venues for a cohesive visitor experience.
- 3.2 Provide assistance and funding to develop and manage operation of Discovery Centers and or Gateway Facilities in key locations or orient visitors, and define appropriate interpretive exhibits and materials that support a unified heritage program.
- 3.3 Select additional driving tour loops to utilize scenic qualities of the region and promote their use.
- 3.4 Provide support and funding for improvements at existing interpretive/visitor facilities.
- 3.5 Develop, design, and implement coordinated signage and informational packages using the “Where Time and Tide Meet” logo, potentially including differentiated signage for each loop to reinforce its identity.

- 3.6 Develop interpretive wayside exhibits along the driving tour loops. Interpretive wayside exhibits will also be developed for historical and natural settings to highlight the history and significance of resources along the route for self-guided tours.

Community and Economic Development

Community and economic development includes activities designed to support and stimulate community growth and capital-base expansion. Strategies include actions for assisting individuals, organizations, and communities, who will benefit from heritage tourism, such as bed and breakfasts, restaurants, and other visitor service industries. The Heritage programs and its activities will promote and assist community and economic development through marketing initiatives, creation and promotion of business and development opportunities, assistance in securing development financing, and promotion of locally-based businesses.

GOAL 1:

Designate “Target Investment Zones” for public investment that serves as a catalyst for further public and private investment.

Objective:

- 1.1 Stimulate rehabilitation and reinvestment to improve the condition of the physical resources within the heritage area to retain and enhance the integrity of the setting and its character.

GOAL 2:

Increase the economic activity associated with tourism, creating opportunities for small business development, job growth, and a stronger tax base.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Support community growth and capital-based expansion by assisting efforts for community revitalization and the reuse of historic structures and sites.
- 2.2 Providing financial and technical assistance for related revitalization efforts that reinforce historic venues and settings for heritage tourism, such as business retention efforts and assistance in new business creation that takes advantage of the Heritage area’s resources and historic rehabilitation.
- 2.3 Providing periodic assistance for demonstration projects which offer exemplary practices in coordinating development, reuse, and/or preservation with other revitalization

programs. This might include support of coordinated “Main Street” programs for the Region’s core resource communities (notably the Towns of Leonardtown, Chesapeake Beach, North Beach, Indian Head and the community of Solomons), or providing technical, marketing, and financial assistance to localities and businesses.

- 2.4 Assist local businesses that are involved in historical rehabilitation or restoration, such as antique stores or bed and breakfasts.
- 2.5 Strengthen the coordination of efforts that Heritage Area designation will bring to sustain and build partnerships between the Southern Maryland Travel and Tourism Committee and other organizations that represent public and private interests with connections to all facets of tourism including attractions, lodging, food service, maritime activities, historic preservation, and public relations.

GOAL 3:

Enhance economic development and tourism while expanding recreational opportunities in the region consistent with its heritage resources.

Objectives:

- 3.1: Improve visitor information and support services in the Region. Greater visitor support information and assistance will increase activity and visitation throughout the entire heritage region. Such information broadens the prospects for visitor’s discovering new sites, exploring existing and new interpretive facilities, and supporting heritage venues, events and facilities. These elements are essential for the success of the Heritage Program.
- 3.2 Supporting development of informational materials within the Heritage region, such as maps, guides, and related services. Improvements include assistance in packaging tours of the Region that incorporate multiple services and might be targeted to different market segments including business travelers, leisure travelers, and residents.
- 3.3 Using new technologies, such as the Internet, to create the potential for revenue sources to support development of region-wide information and products.

GOAL 4:

Balance the impact of tourism activity with the quality of life enjoyed by residents.

Objectives:

- 4.1: Target assistance in compatible areas with compatible uses for the best return on

investment. *Economic development should target areas and uses that will be compatible with the character of the region. Targeting compatible uses also will assist in balancing the impacts of increased tourism on the local quality of life and provide the best return on investment.*

- 4.2 Encourage centrally managed entrepreneurial activities, such as logo licensing, fee-based activities, and/or development packaging.
- 4.3 Maximize targeted assistance for tourism within the region and downtown areas of the Towns of Leonardtown, Chesapeake Beach, North Beach, Indian Head and the community of Solomons, while minimizing investments in tourism development in outlying residential areas.

Preservation and Resource Stewardship

Preservation and resource stewardship pertain to the protection, preservation, enhancement, and management of the natural, cultural, and historic resources within the heritage area for future generations. In general, these functions are the responsibility of the county and municipal governments, public entities, and private interests that control and manage buildings and land use. The Heritage Management Plan should encourage public and private organizations within the heritage region to recognize the value of historic resources, as well as the region's natural settings and its recreational resources. The entity(s) responsible for implementing the plan should advocate enactment by responsible local government of measures for effective resource protection. In general, actions and strategies under this program will be aimed at enhancing the climate for preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings and conservation of natural and cultural resources. These actions together preserve the setting which serves as a pre-requisite for promoting heritage tourism in the region.

GOAL 1:

Encourage the preservation and conservation of heritage resources

Objectives:

- 1.1 Expand and promote heritage education, using natural and cultural resources within the region to communicate the importance of the resources to the quality of life for residents of Southern Maryland and to educate them about threats to those resources and opportunities for action.
- 1.2 Create an environment for a stronger public policy foundation to support resource

preservation and conservation by broadening public understanding of the value of heritage resources.

- 1.3 Assist the counties, towns, and private interests in their efforts to protect, preserve, enhance and manage the heritage resources of the region for future generations.
- 1.4 Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic sites and structures.

GOAL 2:

Encourage the preservation and conservation of unique natural areas and rural character which represent the setting for heritage resources.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Advocate enactment of appropriate resource protection legislation by responsible local government entities.
- 2.2 Assist local governments in the development of resource protection/management programs to ensure the long term protection of heritage resources.
- 2.3 Support land trusts and conservancy organizations in their efforts to utilize easements to protect resource lands and where possible encourage their protection efforts to include use of sites for interpretation.

GOAL 3:

Preserve the continuity and authenticity of cultural arts, heritage attractions, heritage events and indigenous regional traditions.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Enhance the climate for preservation and rehabilitation of historical structures and sites and conservation of natural and cultural resources within the Southern Maryland Heritage Region.
- 3.2 Balance the preservation, conservation, and maintenance of the Heritage Area's natural and cultural resources with the economic and social well-being of the region.

Marketing and Outreach

Marketing and outreach provides focus on activities and initiatives designed to promote the

region's identity and offerings to local and regional audiences. Targeted marketing programs, the development of a uniform logo for signage and products, and interpretation of core themes all will be part of a broad-based marketing strategy to develop and enhance awareness of the region, attract a larger, multi-market audience, and achieve optimum visitation.

GOAL 1:

Enhance the visitor appeal and enjoyment of Southern Maryland's history, culture, and natural environment and scenic beauty by improving the overall "product" and visitor experience.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Foster a stronger regional identity for the Southern Maryland Heritage area and develop a comprehensive marketing plan for the region.
- 1.2 Coordinate marketing, promotional activities, and local programming with public/private activities and attractions to maximize exposure for the region and develop mutually supportive marketing and promotional programs.
- 1.3 Develop mutually supportive marketing and promotional activities with state and local government agencies, existing tourism business development organizations, Museums, and businesses engaged in providing visitor support services to leverage resources and secure greater co-marketing opportunities for the Heritage Area Program.
- 1.4 Develop a certification program for providers of visitor support services in the heritage area to enhance marketing efforts. Such a program formalizes the program support provided by the private sector and helps to insure a better quality visitor experience and product to continue to market over time
- 1.5 Develop a network of cooperative relationships with existing tourism and business development organizations to assist in marketing efforts.

Managing Implementation and Partnerships

Broadening visitation to the Southern Maryland Heritage Region and accomplishing the many other related objectives identified in this plan will require a cooperative effort among its partners, who will implement specific projects and programs to achieve the objectives and advance the strategies of the Management Plan. Implementing the Management Plan also will require commitment of significant financial resources from a variety of sources. These financial resources will be used to fund the staffing and operations, program activities, and capital projects required to implement this plan.

Establishing an effective management platform or organizational structure for focusing efforts to accomplish heritage program objectives will be critical to program success. Such an organizational structure should serve to inform, coordinate and unite the efforts of various organizations currently engaged in telling the region's story and promoting various aspects of the heritage program to improve overall effectiveness. The structural framework should also serve as a basis for integrating new partners into policy, planning, and implementation decisions. Partnerships are important to the successful implementation of this Strategic Plan for the Heritage Region. The role of individual partners varies, but partnerships are basic to virtually every facet of the Plan. In order to work within an overall management framework, each partner must understand what role they are being asked to play in the evolution and development of the Southern Maryland Heritage Program. The following outlines the recommended actions that partners within the overall management framework would be requested to undertake.

GOAL 1:

Create a non-profit corporation (501-C-3) or the “Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium” (SMHAC) to pilot efforts to implement this plan and establish a management platform for implementation that brings together heritage area partners, and provide an organizational form that will permit it to seek grants from both public and private sources to augment the range and types of projects that can be undertaken to promote heritage tourism within the region.

Creation of a non-profit corporation (501-C-3) or the “Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium” is recommended as the best means of piloting efforts to implement this plan. The non-profit corporate entity can serve to bring together the many heritage area partners which are currently engaged in a large number and wide range of heritage area initiatives, provide a forum for assuring their collective efforts yield intended benefits to the region, and provide an organizational form that will permit it to seek grants from both the public sector and from private foundations to augment the range and types of projects that can be undertaken to promote heritage tourism within the region.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Assist partners in the development of a tourism infrastructure, such as visitor services and facilities and enhanced heritage tourism and recreation offerings;
- 1.2 Create a regional identity and participate with others in regional marketing/promotional strategies to increase tourism; and
- 1.3 Partnering with local communities and organizations as well as state and local agencies or foundations to achieve community revitalization and economic development objectives.

Implementing the Management Plan will tax the current capacity of any existing organization engaged in promoting Heritage Tourism within the region. Many such organizations function as coordinating and review organizations, relying largely on technical and staff assistance provided by the Counties or others to accomplish essential tasks, such as preparing grant applications, publishing newsletters, and continuing public and community relations.

GOAL 2:

Establish an organizational structure that serves to inform, coordinate and unite the efforts of existing organizations currently engaged in promotion, interpretation or other aspects of the telling the region's story. It should also serve as a basis for integrating new partners in projects, marketing, programming, and development of interpretive facilities.

A new non-profit will expand the capacity to perform the numerous tasks outlined in this Management Plan. The process of creating such an organization should also increase opportunities for existing organizations engaged in various aspects of heritage tourism to define the role and activities of the organization.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Develop a mission statement for the organization to reflect its role as a catalyst for heritage preservation and tourism development;
- 2.2 Develop the "Articles of Incorporation" and "Bylaws" as necessary to establish a Board of Directors that assures broad representation from existing heritage area organizations and service providers and businesses;
- 2.3 Establish an effective committee structure;
- 2.4 Define the scope of organizational operations and activities.

GOAL 3:

Strengthen the public/private partnership that will interpret, communicate, publicize, protect, and restore the resources within the Heritage Region and accomplish these goals via partnerships among local and regional leaders, non-profit organizations, businesses, and state agencies.

Objective:

- 3.1 Maximize partnerships between the Heritage Program management entity and public/private interests to advance the mission and leverage capacity to support further development and evolution of the region's Heritage Program over time.

