

Section 16: Five-Year Schedule of Tourism Marketing Projects and Marketing Outreach Programs

Resident Market

Objective: Increase local awareness of the opportunities and resources available to communities and organizations within SMHA by developing a “Public Information Program” that will inform and enlist support of the residents and local institutions. The “Public Information Program” should include the following actions in order of implementation:

YEAR ONE

- Create Local Outreach Mailing List for Each County: Create SMHA Mailing List of schools, school organizations, and libraries, local government agencies, county agencies, state government agencies, local, county and state representatives, historical societies, community/civic organizations, art organizations, museums, lodging and food services, and other visitor attractions open to the public. Other public and private SMHA stakeholders that will be added to the mailing list include local media sources (especially newspapers), local radio and cable stations.
- Publish SMHA Newsletter: Publish SMHA newsletter on a regular quarterly schedule and distribute it to SMHA local outreach mailing list. The newsletter will include an information section on SMHA actions and programs, a calendar of events, and articles by and about SMHA partner institutions and organizations.
- Develop SMHA Fact-Sheet: Develop SMHA Fact-Sheet that includes a brief history of SMHA; relevant excerpts of SMHA vision; maps of SMHA; an explanation of management of SMHA and its resources; and phone numbers where one can call for more information. The fact sheet will serve as a one-piece press kit until a package press kit is developed, and will accompany press releases and other materials distributed to media and tourism industry sources.
- Regular Reviews: Organize an annual SMHA Review Meeting. The annual review will include an Executive Director's "State of the Southern Maryland Heritage Area" address that presents information about the year's accomplishments, proposed events, and future actions. The Board also will conduct an annual SMHA Resident Benefits Survey to determine community perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of living within the SMHA. The annual review will include the publication of an annual SMHA Progress Report, which could be made available to the public and/or published in local newspapers.

- Use Existing Local Print and Broadcast Media to Inform Residents: Provide media sources in each county with information and photos for use in publishing articles relating to projects and events in the SMHA. SMHA Press Releases and Press Kits could be issued at key milestones in the development of the SMHA.

Short public service announcements (PSAs) can be developed to inform residents of SMHA highlights and landmark events. Most local radio stations have allotted budgets for community PSAs and are willing to donate limited studio time for recording a 15 or 30 second spot to use on the air. In addition, regional television and radio stations should be contacted for development of opportunities to showcase the SMHA “live and in person”. For example, the SMHA could offer the grounds of an historic site or museum for a morning or evening local news broadcast.

- Utilize Existing Special Events: Participate in community events to raise the profile of the SMHA. Currently, there are a number of events and festivals in the region that could be used as a platform for the SMHA’s marketing efforts and help to promote a regional image. The SMHA should participate in these events, which offer outreach opportunities and which may eventually provide an outlet to sell SMHA products. The SMHA Newsletter, Mailing List, and Calendar could be used in turn to help promote community events and festivals.
- Offer a Resident Discount Admission Rate to SMHA Museums and Attractions: Implement and advertise a special resident discount program that offers reduced admission rates to SMHA museums and interpretive facilities for residents of Calvert, Charles and St. Mary’s counties.
- Establish SMHA Volunteer Network: Form a subsidiary group, such as “Friends of the SMHA,” to act as a network of volunteers who can assist with regional SMHA sponsored events and festivals, distributing the newsletter and other mass mailings, and staffing outreach projects. Significant donations of time and effort should be recognized and rewarded on some level, on an annual basis, perhaps at the annual SMHA meeting.

YEAR TWO

- Create a Traveling Display: Create an SMHA Traveling Display that incorporates a Discovery Box and SMHA Visual Presentation with large photo panels of the region. The display can be used in conjunction with the SMHA Discovery Box and Learner’s Guide for detailed presentations or it can be used on its own as a visually informative exhibit. The display can also be used to inform an audience about the SMHA and to encourage them to become advocates and/or volunteers by promoting its vision and attractions. It can be used by SMHA staff or by members of the SMHA Board of Directors for presentations about the SMHA; as a static display in local public buildings such as shopping malls, county buildings, or centrally located public areas; and at local festivals

or events that feature displays or booths that highlight community organizations.

- Establish a Uniform Visitor Tracking System: Develop and implement a system of tracking visitor origin and demographics that can be utilized by even the smallest interpretive or commercial facilities. SMHA volunteers can be tapped to assist in collecting and analyzing data:
 - Person-to-person surveys conducted on site.
 - Point of purchase zip code information, i.e., getting zip code information from ticket buyers or shoppers at point of purchase.
 - Input data in software programs that disseminate visitor demographic information, eg. Zipdata, etc., for more in-depth market analysis.

YEAR THREE

- Develop a Heritage Area Award Program: Implement an SMHA System of Awards, which recognize exceptional preservation and conservation projects and partnership efforts within SMHA. The awards could be a yearly event and include the presentation of a commemorative plaque or artistic rendering of an aspect of SMHA. The award system will promote the identity and awareness of SMHA in the region and recognize individual contributions. Consider partnering this effort with regional or national preservation and/or conservation organizations, such as the Sierra Club, Izaak Walton League, and the Audubon Society.
- Develop an SMHA Workshop/Training Program for Local Tourism-related Businesses: Develop an SMHA Workshop/Training Program to inform owners and employees of local tourism support businesses about the heritage area. As partners in SMHA development effort, this will heighten their awareness concerning past, present, and future SMHA actions. Invitations to the workshop can be mailed to all relevant businesses in SMHA and immediate vicinity. Workshops can be coordinated with local Chambers of Commerce and business associations and scheduled so as to not interfere with regular business hours.
- Develop a Training Program for Front Line SMHA Volunteers and Docents: Develop an SMHA Training Program for Volunteers and Docents who will work at museums and other interpretive facilities within the SMHA. This can be coordinated between SMHA and the Southern Maryland Museum Association to insure that the information provided is accurate and consistent with the SMHA Interpretive Framework as well as accepted museum standards of interpretation. Existing materials currently used for training at museums and interpretive facilities can be integrated to develop an SMHA Resource and Learning Guide or a Docent and Volunteer Manual.

YEAR FOUR

- Publish a Quarterly Calendar of Events and Programs (Year 4): The SMHA Calendar of

Events and Programs will be integrated into the newsletter and distributed to the local outreach mailing list quarterly. Calendars will be distributed to media sources will be accompanied by the SMHA Fact Sheet. This action entails gathering information on events and programs sponsored by SMHA partners including dates, topics, and locations of events and programs.

Non-Resident Market

Objective: Increase non-resident market awareness by developing a “Regional and Out-of-State Promotion and Marketing Program” for the SMHA (in coordination with existing tourism and business development entities). Market the entire region as a "product" with high visibility and impact. Recommended actions include the following:

YEAR ONE

- Establish a Regional Identity: By establishing a regional identity for the SMHA, it will be promoted as a single entity. This includes trademarking the SMHA logo for the region. The logo should be used consistently with any events and products associated with the SMHA, including signage, brochures, products, marketing pieces, and advertising.
- Develop SMHA Web-Site for E-Tourism (Years 1 - 5): By utilizing technology such as the Internet, the SMHA can be promoted and marketed more effectively to a global audience. The SMHA Website currently in place is providing information on the development of the Heritage Area via links to newsletters and county tourism websites. Further development of the existing website can include in-depth information and maps of attractions and resources in the region. The web-site can also provide background information on the creation of the SMHA, link users to other Southern Maryland websites, and provide directions to the region. It should be updated quarterly and include a special feature section, such as a video or photo tour of the SMHA. The web-site could include survey forms that will assist the SMHA to learn about interested and potential visitors. It will provide e-commerce features, such as a virtual store that users can enter to order SMHA products as well as products from partner museums and other interpretive facilities. The SMHA Web-Site will be linked to county, state, and tourism web-sites via a hot button.

YEAR TWO

- Expand the Regional Outreach Mailing List: Develop a regional outreach mailing list that includes regional media sources and tourism and visitor services facilities. An initial mailing can include the SMHA fact sheet; press kits and press releases should be sent as they are developed.
- Regional Distribution of the SMHA Newsletter: The distribution of the SMHA

Newsletter can be expanded by mailing to organizations outside the SMHA boundary. These mailings can include other Maryland heritage areas, out-of-state heritage areas, such as those in Pennsylvania, as well as other regional and out-of-state cultural, heritage, and tourism agencies.

- Develop a Press Kit and Implement a Press Release Schedule: Press releases should be distributed to both the regional and local outreach mailing lists for any significant SMHA event. A start-up SMHA Press Kit could include a pocket folder with an SMHA logo label on the front. The press kit should include contact information, SMHA brochures as they are developed (until brochures are developed, use existing SMHA museum/attractions brochures), an SMHA Fact-Sheet, and press releases detailing latest developments. The SMHA Press Kit can be revised annually or as significant developments occur.
- Publish an SMHA Brochure (Year 2 and Year 5): Publish an SMHA Foldout Brochure and other guides for distribution in and outside the SMHA region. The brochure can describe the resources of the SMHA and include an overview of the heritage area, a brief description of its history and themes, a map of the region that includes locations of key resources, visitor information centers, visitor support businesses, public transportation facilities, towns, villages, and trails.
- Become a Member of Peer Organizations: The SMHA should establish and continually position its regional visibility by becoming an active member of the state's heritage program. By participating in events and programs related to the *Maryland Heritage and Tourism Areas Program*, this will position the SMHA's identity in the context of other Maryland Certified Heritage Areas.
- Create Host Groups: The SMHA should develop a host network that partners hotels and B&B's in the SMHA. A host network can provide mutual support among participants by combining resources to develop advertising and promotional campaigns which can offer coordinated discounts during off-peak seasons to attract more visitors.
- Develop a Public-Private Marketing Program: The SMHA should develop a public/private partnership marketing program involving local, county, and state agencies, organizations, and entities. Partnerships will assist tourism-related businesses and attractions, assess their needs, and share costs. Services could include communications marketing for individual or group attractions, marketing and visitor demographic research, training, financing, business planning, and joint publications.

YEAR THREE

- Conduct Familiarization Tours: The SMHA should contact the Maryland Office of Tourism Development about FAM (Familiarization) Tours, travel writers (freelance,

newspaper and magazine), and tour group planners. These tours offer an excellent opportunity for direct contact with the people who will write about the SMHA as a destination for regional, national, and international visitors.

- Implement Packaged Tours and Passport Ticketing Programs: The SMHA should implement an SMHA Packaged Tour and Passport Ticketing Program that will link heritage/visitor services and resources within the heritage area. Initially, packaged tours can be developed for specific target markets, such as seniors, school groups or bus tours. Future expansion of a packaged tour program can include specific interests, such as biking/eco-touring packages, shopping excursion packages, history packages, and family packages. Packaged tour programs can include discounted access to historic and interpretive sites and museums (via the SMHA Passport Ticket), parks, recreation facilities, hotels and B&B facilities (for overnight packages), eating and drinking establishments, and water/land shuttle services. A passport ticketing program can be developed collaboratively with SMHA museums and interpretive facilities to include discounted access to multiple historic and interpretive sites and museums in an all-inclusive admissions ticket. Because many of the museums and historic sites in the SMHA are not open daily nor adequately staffed for daily operations, the SMHA should implement a shared docent or volunteer program that ensures these smaller facilities have adequate staffing to accommodate daily or weekend visitor access to all facilities.

YEAR FOUR

- Implement Group and Bus Tour Marketing and Programs: The SMHA should implement a marketing program that specifically targets bus and group tour operators, including tour packages tailored to suit the needs of tour operators and their customers. Bus associations and group tour companies enjoy a booming business on the East Coast, particularly in the SMHA regional market area. Seniors and retirees make up a significant percentage of their customer base and many of the attractions offered in the SMHA, such as historic sites, museums, and shopping, are attractive to the seniors market. Group tour operators can perform a significant amount of marketing or “leg work” for the SMHA through their own marketing and advertising programs. To attract professional tour operators, the SMHA passport ticket program can include special discounts for groups of 40 (average bus capacity) or more and similar discounts can be packaged for dining and overnight accommodations. Larger towns within the heritage area may have to serve initially as staging areas for motorcoach tours because parking and visitor facilities are concentrated in these areas. Shuttle services may be used to connect outlying areas and attractions.
- Develop an SMHA Signature Event: Develop an annual signature event that showcases one or more of the heritage area themes to draw visitors to the area and to stimulate resident and merchant interest in the heritage area. This can draw on SMHA’s mature volunteer force.

YEAR FIVE

- Market the SMHA in Regional Forums: The SMHA should continually build and expand upon its relationships with local and county Chambers of Commerce and with the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, as well as create partnership opportunities for marketing the SMHA in regional tourism forums. The SMHA Traveling Display can be used on its own or in conjunction with county and state displays as a promotional device to reach regional and out-of-state markets. Forums include regional and state travel and tourism shows (usually sponsored by MD Office of Tourism) and regional and state tour operator shows and conventions (usually sponsored by bus associations, travel associations, and AAA). The display can also be placed in visitor centers on major travel routes located in the heritage area, including US 301, and Routes 5, 2 and 4.
- Improve Interstate Coordination: The SMHA should explore the feasibility of developing or participating in a Maryland-Virginia Heritage Areas Partnership Association to include Maryland and Virginia heritage areas located adjacent to or near the SMHA. The SMHA and other regional heritage areas could establish an information and marketing exchange program complete with seminars and other shared activities.

MARKETING OPERATIONS SCHEDULE

Markets: **R** Resident **NR** Non-Resident

MARKET	MARKETING PROJECT	YEAR ONE	YEAR TWO	YEAR THREE	YEAR FOUR	YEAR FIVE
R	Publish an SMHA Newsletter					
R	Develop an SMHA Fact-Sheet					
R	Create Local Outreach Mailing List for Each County					
R	Quarterly and annual SMHA Reviews					
R	Use Existing Local Print and Broadcast Media to Inform Residents					
R	Utilize Existing Special Events					
R	Establish a Volunteer Network					
NR	Expand the Regional Outreach Mailing List					
NR	Develop a Press Kit and Implement a Press Release Schedule					
NR	Regional Distribution of SMHA Newsletter					
NR	Establish Regional Identity					
NR	Conduct Visitor Surveys					
NR	Form Intra-Regional Partnerships					
NR	Develop SMHA Website as site for E-Tourism					
R	Create a Traveling Display					
R	Establish a Uniform Visitor Tracking System					

MARKET	MARKETING PROJECT	YEAR ONE	YEAR TWO	YEAR THREE	YEAR FOUR	YEAR FIVE
NR	Publish SMHA Brochure					
NR	Become a Member of Peer Organizations					
NR	Create Host Groups					
NR	Develop Public/Private Marketing Program					
R	Develop a Heritage Area Award Program					
R	Develop an SMHA Workshop/Training Program for Local Tourism-related Businesses					
R	Develop a Training Program for Frontline SMHA Volunteers and Docents					
NR	Conduct Familiarization Tours					
NR	Implement Packaged Tours and Passport Ticketing Program					
R	Publish a Quarterly Calendar of Events and Programs					
NR	Implement Group and Bus Tour Marketing and Programs					
NR	Develop an SMHA Signature Event					
NR	Market the SMHA in Regional Forums					
NR	Improve Interstate Coordination					