

SUMMARY

The Program

The Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program is a partnership between state agencies and local communities to promote heritage tourism experiences in the State's distinctive regions. This is accomplished through the designation of heritage areas that contain significant concentrations of historic, cultural, and natural resources. Heritage area initiatives combine tourism and small business development with preservation, cultural and natural resource conservation, recreation, and education in a strategic effort to enhance a community's economic and culture. Maryland's program is one of many state and federal heritage area initiatives in place or under development throughout the country.

The Heritage Area

Located in Anne Arundel County, the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area exemplifies Maryland's rich historic, cultural, and natural legacy. Inextricably intertwined with the shoreline, rivers, and creeks of the Chesapeake Bay, the area extends along the bay from Sandy Point State Park south to the Calvert County line. Its western boundary is formed by U.S. 50-301 and Solomons Island Road.



Sandy Point State Park

The Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area encompasses a wealth of resources of state, national, and international significance. These diverse resources range from the well-preserved baroque city plan and historic buildings of Annapolis to the pastoral landscapes, historic sites, and watermen's villages of South County; from prominent landmarks such as the Maryland State House, U.S. Naval Academy, and London Town House and Gardens to waterfront parks such as Sandy Point State Park and Quiet Waters Park. The history and culture of the heritage area have been and continue to be shaped by the Chesapeake Bay, one of the world's great estuarine systems. Major events in the birth and growth of the nation took place in the Annapolis region. This experience is in many ways a model for the rest of the country.

The Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area is an established heritage tourism destination and possesses a quality of life that is highly valued by residents. The Maryland Heritage Areas Program provides an exciting opportunity to strengthen heritage tourism in a way that enhances quality of life by contributing to the local economy, improving management of tourism activities, and preserving and deepening appreciation of the area's resources and traditions.

The Management Plan

The Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area was designated by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority as a Recognized Heritage Area in 1997. In order to achieve Certified Heritage Area status and become eligible for a variety of benefits from the State (grants, program support from state agencies, and tax incentives for eligible properties), a Management Plan is required defining the collaborative actions necessary to foster a successful heritage area.

The Management Plan sets an overall vision for the heritage area's future and presents a strategic action plan for future development and management of heritage resources. At the core of the vision and the action plan is the principle of *balance*, to ensure that heritage tourism and related economic activity take place in a manner that supports quality of life in the heritage area. Other core principles include:

- recognition of the *diversity* of the heritage area's people, places, and environments; and
- *continuing history*, or the interplay of past, present, and future in the contemporary life of the heritage area.

The process used to develop the Management Plan was an open one designed to involve the many partners who will participate in establishing a successful heritage area. This process was guided by the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area Steering Committee, a group of approximately 45 individuals representing the public and private sectors, and community, historic, business, and visitor interests. A smaller Executive Committee, comprised of representatives of key public and private sector agencies and organizations, was responsible for day-to-day management of the process. Interviews with Steering Committee members and other stakeholders were



City Dock, Annapolis



Captain Salem Avery House, Shady Side

conducted to gain an early understanding of key issues and ideas for the future. Two series of public meetings were held – prior to formulation of the Plan Vision and following development of a preliminary Action Plan – to foster communication and solicit input on emerging issues and ideas.

Key Recommendations

The Management Plan recommends numerous strategies, ranging from capital investments to new programs to regulatory mechanisms for the preservation of heritage resources, which will require a significant commitment of resources by heritage area institutions. The items critical to the success of the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area have been identified and prioritized under the following categories:

- Interpretation
- Physical Facilities
- Reaching Out to Heritage Audiences
- Moving About the Heritage Area



U.S. Naval Academy

Interpretation

Heritage resources and their interpretation are at the core of the Management Plan. The Plan proposes linking and enriching the diverse sites and resources within the heritage area through an “interpretive framework” comprised of unifying themes supported by new programs and products. This framework is structured around three primary interpretive themes – Waterways, Living Past, and America’s Roots – and a number of secondary themes that can be used to structure interpretive activities at the various sites and attractions in the heritage area. Programs and products derived from the interpretive themes are proposed to “fill in” the gaps in space and time between heritage attractions and to establish effective connections among area resources. Examples include cooperative staff training and other forms of improved communications among heritage organizations; development of self-guided tours, walking tours, and an audio auto tour of South County; and coordinated festivals and special events. Performing and visual arts and other components of the area’s rich cultural heritage should be an integral part of interpretive programming. Another important recommendation is to work with the two largest and most visited sites – the U.S. Naval Academy and the Maryland State House – to explore opportunities for coordinated interpretation and heritage tourism promotion.

Physical Facilities

One expanded facility and two new ones are considered to be especially important for the continued success and future growth of heritage tourism in the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area. These facilities are Historic London Town and Gardens, the Capital City Visitors Center, and the Historic Annapolis Foundation museum.

Historic London Town and Gardens: As a site where history, archaeology, a splendid natural setting, and a woodland garden come together to produce a unique place, London Town has great potential to support increased visitation and learning programs for heritage tourists and residents alike. An ambitious master plan has been prepared to help this site realize its promise as an educational and heritage tourism destination through the establishment of a new Archaeology Learning Center and associated facility and site improvements. Implementation of this master plan is a priority for the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area.

Capital City Visitors Center: The existing Visitors Center operated by the Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Conference and Visitors Bureau at 26 West Street in Annapolis has inadequate space to accommodate increasing visitation and is affected by unreliable parking availability in the adjacent Gotts Court Garage. A larger facility that provides comprehensive orientation and information services while helping to manage the movement of visitors through the heritage area is considered vital to enhancing the quality of the heritage tourism experience while maintaining quality of life for residents. Thus the Plan proposes development of a new Visitors Center in Annapolis to replace the existing facility. The Plan takes no position on a specific site, identifying as a priority short-term action a site feasibility/selection study. In addition to providing a central point for visitor orientation and information, this facility will accommodate and encourage visitors to park their cars and use alternative forms of transportation, such as walking, biking, shuttle transit, and local tour buses.

Museum: Historic Annapolis Foundation is currently exploring establishment of a museum focused primarily on the history of Annapolis. This museum can play a major role in the Annapolis, London Town, and South County



William Brown House, London Town



William Paca House and Garden

Heritage Area by presenting the richness and diversity of resources in Annapolis and the area as a whole. Highlighting this diversity will entice heritage tourists to stay longer and make repeat visits and provide residents with a deeper appreciation of local history and culture.

Reaching Out to Heritage Audiences

An important objective of the Management Plan is to attract heritage tourists who are interested in the area's history and culture. National surveys have demonstrated that heritage tourists spend more money, stay longer, and participate in more activities while traveling. The Plan recommends that the Conference and Visitors Bureau expand marketing and public relations programs on behalf of the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area to reach a larger potential heritage tourism audience. Key components of this initiative include:

- Market research to define specific target markets and niches
- Design of graphic images that are recognizable by both visitors and residents as representative of the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area
- Development of persuasive marketing materials that incorporate the heritage area interpretive themes and linkages

Moving About the Heritage Area

The ability of vehicles and people to move freely about the heritage area is a major concern for visitors and residents alike. Visitors are most concerned about becoming lost or spatially disoriented, while traffic congestion is a major source of tension for residents and also affects visitors. Several actions are recommended as priorities to facilitate ease of movement within the heritage area.

Wayfinding Signage: Establishment of a coordinated, visually consistent system of trailblazer signs is recommended to allow visitors to move with confidence about the heritage area. This system should be instituted at both the vehicular and pedestrian levels, to direct the public to heritage sites and resources from area roadways and to guide visitors experiencing Annapolis and other destinations on foot.

Parole Interchange Improvements: The joining of U.S. 50-301, MD 2 (Solomons Island Road), and MD 450 (West



MD2 bridge over South River

Street) in the Parole area is an important “gateway” for visitors and residents traveling from Annapolis to London Town and South County. This interchange is constrained by the lack of complete access between U.S. 50-301 and Route 2 and the at-grade, signalized intersection of MD 2 and MD 450. While the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is planning for improvements to the intersection of U.S. 50-301 and MD 2, current plans do not call for a fully upgraded interchange or for improvements to the MD 2/MD 450 intersection. Cooperative planning with SHA is recommended to ensure that improvements to this vital link in the area’s highway system optimize mobility for visitors and residents alike.

Visitors Center Transportation Improvements: As noted, the Visitors Center is considered to be central to a strategy of encouraging visitors to leave their cars and use alternative means of transportation. To implement this strategy, a series of transportation improvements should be developed as an integral part of the Visitors Center program. These improvements include adequate access for vehicles; visitor parking; a staging area for arriving motor coaches and bus registration; space for local tour buses and shuttle vehicles; a bicycle station; and pedestrian improvements between the Visitors Center and major destinations in downtown Annapolis.

Bicycle Improvements: As the only location where two national trail systems – the East Coast Greenway from Maine to Florida and the American Discovery Trail from California to Delaware – will intersect, the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area offers great potential for bicycling to be part of the heritage tourism experience. The highest priority bicycle improvement is to establish continuous on-street bike lanes from the Severn River Bridge to the new Visitors Center. (Bike lanes are currently in place that connect the heavily used Baltimore and Annapolis Hiking and Biking Trail with the Severn River Bridge.) In addition, planning for roadway improvements to Rowe Boulevard should incorporate bike paths as part of a strategy of developing an area-wide bicycle network. Map/guide information regarding bicycle touring should be developed for distribution at the Visitors Center as the bicycle “hub” of the heritage area.

Private Commercial Activity

Shopping, dining, overnight stays, and similar activities served by private sector businesses are an essential part of



Downtown Annapolis

the heritage tourism experience. As heritage tourism grows as a result of implementation of the priority actions described above; there will be a corresponding increase in local economic activity to meet the heightened demand for goods and services provided by private businesses. The annual economic impacts resulting from implementation of the action plan are estimated as follows:

- \$72 million increased spending on goods and services ¹
- 1,070 new jobs created generating \$19.8 million in employment earnings
- \$3.9 million in state and \$1.5 million in local tax revenues

The increased economic activity will benefit existing business establishments and provide impetus for the startup of new enterprises in the hospitality and retail sectors. The economic benefits will be experienced in Annapolis and in Anne Arundel County both inside and outside of the heritage area – for example, in the Parole area, which has a concentration of hotels, restaurants, and other visitor-serving businesses. As part of the Management Plan, priority zones for compatible private investment within the heritage area boundaries have been identified. These “target investment zones” include Annapolis/Inner West Street and Eastport in Annapolis and Mayo Road/London Town and Deale in Anne Arundel County.



Natural shoreline, South River

Management

The priority programs and actions required to make the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area a success are quite complex, requiring unprecedented levels of collaboration and commitment of significant public and private sector resources. The Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area Steering Committee has already made major strides forward in directing preparation of the Management Plan. To continue this momentum, it is proposed that the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area Coordinating Council be formed under the auspices of the Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Conference and Visitors Bureau. This Council’s mission will be to promote heritage tourism development and resource conservation in accordance with

¹ This figure includes both direct spending by visitors and purchase of goods and services from vendors by tourism businesses.

the provisions of the Management Plan. The Council's Advisory Board will include representatives of the governmental agencies and private institutions that will be the primary partners in implementing the Management Plan. The Coordinating Council's first priority will be to hire a director experienced in heritage resource management and fund raising and one support staff person. Over time, the Council and its staff will seek supplemental funding from foundations and other private or public sources to offset in part funding from general revenues.

Establishment of Annapolis, London Town, and South County as a successful heritage area promises countless benefits to residents and visitors in such diverse areas as preservation of cultural and natural resources; education and awareness of local history and traditions; enhanced economic activity; and improved transportation linkages. The Management Plan lays out a challenging agenda for achieving a future in which heritage tourism works to support the high quality of life in the heritage area. With the commitment of a variety of partners – local and state governments, private institutions and organizations, and others – the vision and strategies laid out in the Plan can be brought to fruition, and the Annapolis, London Town, and South County Heritage Area can become a national model for preserving, enhancing, and presenting heritage resources.