

PREPARATION: YOURSELF, YOUR BUSINESS,

# your community

## cultural heritage planning

Cultural heritage tourism must be locally driven if it is to accurately reflect the culture, values and goals of the community. It is imperative that a community collectively decides what resources it wants to share with visitors, and then works to develop a strategy that benefits everyone. The first question to ask when traveling down this road, is “Do you want more visitors?” If the answer is yes, then “Under what circumstances?”

To address these questions successfully, The National Trust for Historic Preservation ([www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org)) suggests engaging in a four-step process.

### STEP ONE: ASSESS THE POTENTIAL

Assessing the potential for heritage tourism in your region is an essential first step. Evaluate your assets in these five areas:

- Attractions.
- Visitor services.
- Organizational capabilities.
- Protection of resources for the long term.
- Marketing.



Twilight history cruise aboard the Carillon Cruise Boat, Shoreham, courtesy of the Sheldon Museum.



Photo courtesy of the Vermont Department of Economic Development.

Start by listing your resources. The goal is not just to enumerate, but to also evaluate potential, quality and level of service. Your initial assessment also gives baseline data—benchmark information that can be used to measure progress and help make key decisions as the cultural heritage program develops.

### STEP TWO: PLAN AND ORGANIZE

Make good use of human and financial resources. They are the keys that open the doors to sustainable cultural heritage tourism.

- Human resources—a community united can accomplish a lot; a community divided is not ready for cultural heritage tourism.
- Local support—gain backing of area business people, and local governments; seek assistance of service organizations with strong membership bases, and capture commitments in a written contract.

### STEP THREE: PREPARE, PROTECT, MANAGE

As you take this step, look to the future as well as the present. When you prepare for visitors, be sure that the choices made also improve the community for the long term. Plan to win the war, not just the battle. Sustainable tourism depends on preserving the integrity of the resources.

### STEP FOUR: MARKET FOR SUCCESS

Draw new people and money into your community by developing a multi-year, many-tiered marketing plan. The goal is to know your target market and to seize opportunities to reach it through partnering with local, regional, state, or national groups. Include these four components in your marketing plan:

- Public relations.
- Advertising.
- Graphic material.
- Promotions.

Consider documenting your project through video production, or other means. Use that piece as promotional tool, or as a fundraising vehicle for future endeavors.

## tenets of a successful cultural heritage tourism program

There are certain ingredients for success any group engaged in a Cultural Heritage Tourism efforts should keep at hand. Success occurs when:

1. Visitors experience attractions that provide genuine entertainment and educational value.
2. Sites and attractions have been developed to preserve their authenticity.
3. Visitor safety, convenience, and value are paramount concerns.
4. Officials view visitation as an important part of local and regional economy.
5. Business and employment opportunities occur in the communities where cultural heritage tourism development occurs.
6. Visitors travel a circuit to spread the number of visitors among attractions so that less visited sites get their share of visitors and more popular places are not adversely affected by over-visitation and over-commercialization.
7. Regional pride and identity are interpreted in their many facets at area attractions.
8. An understanding exists that tourism requires accomplished hosts as well as visitors, and that a community's hospitality must be genuine.
9. The best promotion is word-of-mouth from the region's residents.
10. Participation in cultural and civic life is cherished.

Success also depends on knowing who you are and the results you are after. *HandMade in America* ([www.wnccrafts.org](http://www.wnccrafts.org)), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the nurturance of craft culture and community in Western North Carolina, suggests that real and long-lasting success occurs when you:

- Build on your assets.
- Address your weaknesses.
- Are authentic—know who you are, and what's important to your community.
- Are patient in the process and impatient in the doing.
- Work hard.
- Plan the work.
- Work the plan, remember that the plan is a living document.
- Get the whole community involved.
- Tell your story.
- Find win-win solutions.
- Celebrate your achievements no matter how small.



Photo courtesy of the Vermont Department of Economic Development.

## keys to the marketplace

Having identified the elements of success, how does one set these concepts in motion? How do you balance visitor needs, demands and interests with the community resources, services and infrastructure? And most importantly, how can this be achieved so that the initiative contributes to, and does not disturb community life?

According to planning consultant Patricia Wells, the first step is to conduct a survey of community resources. Once completed the following questions should be applied to each identified entity:

- What condition is it in?
- What is the best potential use (tour, etc)?
- What would have to be done to preserve and protect resource?
- What would have to be done to make it accessible?
- Are the resources significant/interesting enough to draw visitors?

The particulars on how to conduct the inventory and address the aforementioned questions will be dealt with in the next several sections of this document. For the moment, however, let us assume that they have been answered. You know what you want to do and where you want to go, and you have the roadmap at hand to get you there. You have identified what must to be done for the resource and the community, but what are those assets offering the visitor? Can you also say that you are meeting the following basic visitor needs?

- Comfort (food, drink, bathrooms)
- Orientation
- Welcoming
- Enjoyment
- Socializing
- Respect
- Communication
- Learning
- Choice and control

## accessibility

Accessibility is just one area that overlaps the needs of both the community and the visitor, as 1 in 5 Americans either has a disability or has an immediate family member with one. Access to cultural programs and activities is mandated by federal and state law, while must ensure that programs, services and activities are accessible to people with disabilities in a manner that integrates them with others.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides a broad-based nondiscrimination protection for people with disabilities in employment, public services, public accommodations, transportation and telecommunications. Under these laws not every aspect of the existing structure needs to be accessible, but programs and activities when viewed in their entirety must be integrated, inclusive and provide equal opportunity.

In Vermont, people with disabilities must be given the opportunity to participate in a manner that is equal (though not necessarily identical) to that afforded all others. Not all sites, especially private homes, are fully accessible. That, however, does not mean that they cannot be as welcoming as possible to all visitors—from wheelchair users to people with walkers, to elderly people who have difficulty with stairs. Measures, taken in good faith, are totally acceptable, and include:

- A different entrance.
- Providing video of exhibits in accessible location.
- Offering an interpreter.
- Audio tapes.
- Portable ramps.
- Bringing work or service to car.
- Bring paintings or craft objects to an accessible site in the community.
- Sharing accessible spaces with other artists/craftspeople.
- Providing demonstrations on a particular day at an accessible site.

For planners, the following is worth noting:

A site that is easily accessible to people with disabilities is also easily accessible to those without. If you are planning a significant facility renovation or a new brochure, it helps greatly to be familiar with universal design concepts ([www.design.ncsu.edu/cdu/](http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cdu/)).

A loyal repeat customer is one who feels his/her physical needs are carefully and sensitively met.

## getting others involved

There are a number of ways to get others involved in your project once you know what you want to do and what you need to be successful. Some of the more obvious routes to informing others within the community are through:

- Public meetings.
- Ad hoc advisory committees.
- Press releases.
- Direct mail.
- Making the most of civic groups (Rotary, Kiwanis, Elks, etc).
- Surveying/Collecting data.
- Poster campaigns.
- Engaging interactive media.

Once others are aware of what you are doing, you can engage them in the planning process. Begin by identifying potential stakeholders, as planning by its very nature necessitates identification of partners.

Think of:

- Landowners.
- Businesses.
- Residents.



Vermont Mozart Festival at Kingsland Bay State Park, Ferrisburgh, courtesy of the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing, photo by Dennis Curran.

- Land Developers.
- Government Officials.
- Political Leaders.
- Regional Marketing Organizations.
- Chambers of Commerce.
- Economic Development Organizations.
- Hospitality Groups—including hotels, restaurants, etc.
- Regional Planning Commissions.
- Educational Institutions.
- Financial Institutions.
- Media.
- Recreational Groups.
- Farming Community.
- Environmentalists.
- Farm Association.
- Parks and Recreation officials.
- People with disabilities.

Who can best help move this project forward? Why? How?

## resources

Americans with Disabilities Act, [www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/ada-hom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/ada-hom1.htm).

*Vermont's Guide to Accessible Sites*, created by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Agency of Human Services, 105 South Main Street, Waterbury Vermont 05671-2303, (802) 241-2186. Available on the web at [www.dad.state.vt.us/DVR](http://www.dad.state.vt.us/DVR)

*Design for Accessibility: An Arts Administrator's Guide*, NASAA and NEA Office for Special Constituencies, July 1994. (Tabs 15 and 19)

Jester, Thomas C. and Sharon C. Park. *Making Historic Properties Accessible*. Washington, DC: Preservation Brief 32, NPS, September 1993

Hayward, Judith L. and Thomas C. Jester, compilers. *Accessibility and Historic Preservation Resource Guide*. Windsor, Vermont: Historic Windsor, Inc., 1992, revised 1993.

Wells, Patricia. *The Keys to the Marketplace: Problems and Issues in Cultural Heritage Tourism*. 1997. (Workshop handout)

Also, the Vermont Arts Council (504/ADA Coordinator), and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation can answer specific questions regarding their areas of expertise (See Contacts, Chapter 10).