

An Assessment and Recommendations Report for Heritage Tourism Development in Guilford, Connecticut May 2012



Five Principles of Successful and Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism

Through its work with communities across the country, the National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program has developed five principles to help guide successful and sustainable cultural heritage tourism development:

Principle One: Collaborate

By its very nature, cultural heritage tourism requires effective partnerships. Much more can be accomplished by working together than by working alone.

Principle Two: Find the Fit between the Community and Tourism

Cultural heritage tourism should make a community a better place to live as well as a better place to visit.

Principle Three: Make Sites and Programs Come Alive

Look for ways to make visitor experiences exciting, engaging and interactive.

Principle Four: Focus on Quality and Authenticity

Today's cultural heritage traveler is more sophisticated and will expect a high-quality, authentic experience.

Principle Five: Preserve and Protect Resources

Cultural, historic and natural resources are irreplaceable and are essential to an outstanding visitor experience.

Report prepared for the

Guilford Preservation Alliance

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(Unless noted, all photos are by Carolyn Brackett.)

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Introduction

Guilford, Connecticut is a small town, (population 21,000) located in New Haven County on the Long Island Sound. Arriving in Guilford, words like “charming,” “inviting,” “historic,” “walkable,” and “friendly” come to mind. It is immediately clear that Guilford’s residents take pride in their history and work to preserve their heritage while also cultivating a thriving, economically vibrant community.

With a history that dates back to the 17th century, five historic house museums, a beautiful Town Green, four National Register of Historic Places districts, two local historic districts, hiking trails and other recreational activities, excellent dining and shopping, talented local artisans and a variety of events, programs and festivals, Guilford is not only a great place to live – it is a town with all the elements on which to build a successful heritage tourism program.

In early 2011, the Guilford Preservation Alliance (GPA) board of directors made the decision to provide leadership and build a network of partners to develop and implement a heritage tourism program for Guilford. GPA’s mission is *to preserve and protect the built and natural heritage of the town of Guilford*. This mission has been accomplished through preservation advocacy, public education forums, providing financial assistance to selected projects and many other activities. The decision to focus on heritage tourism emerged from an understanding that Guilford has the cultural, heritage and natural resources to attract visitors and to contribute to Guilford’s economic health while continuing to preserve irreplaceable resources.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Heritage Tourism Program was retained by GPA to facilitate the assessment and planning process. Services were provided by Carolyn Brackett, Senior Program Associate for the Heritage Tourism Program.

The first step was a workshop, *Considering a Heritage Tourism Plan for Guilford, Connecticut*, held on October 18, 2011. The half-day workshop was held at the community center and attracted attendees representing historic sites, arts, land conservation, recreation, government and local business. Carolyn Brackett began the workshop with a presentation on the elements that are necessary to build a successful heritage tourism program. Workshop attendees were then invited to consider and discuss a series of questions including why heritage tourism was desired and what it would accomplish for Guilford and what challenges should be addressed in developing a heritage tourism plan. Carolyn explained that heritage tourism planning begins with an assessment of resources and recommendations on how to proceed with developing a plan. GPA concluded the meeting with a commitment to move forward with planning for an assessment visit.



The Town Green is a beautiful setting for churches, retail, restaurants, Town Hall, the library, businesses and residences.

In the coming months, a GPA planning committee including Rob Vavasour, Shirley Girioni and Harry Haskell worked with Carolyn Brackett to plan the itinerary for an assessment visit. The itinerary was designed to include opportunities to meet with all partners and to tour key sites in Guilford.

The assessment visit was conducted March 20-23, 2012 (itinerary is in the appendix). We would like to thank the many partners who assisted with the assessment visit through planning, meetings and tours:

- Shirley Girioni** – Guilford Preservation Alliance
- Rob Vavasour** – Guilford Preservation Alliance
- Harry Haskell** – Guilford Preservation Alliance
- Ellen and Mike Ebert** – Guilford Preservation Alliance
- Dennis and Linda Culliton** – Guilford Preservation Alliance
- Ed Meyer** – State Senator
- Pat Widlitz** = State Representative
- Joe Mazza** – Guilford First Selectman
- Gary MacElhiney** – Guilford Selectperson
- Brian McGlone** – Guilford Economic Development Coordinator
- Rick Maynard** – Guilford Parks and Recreation
- George Kral** – Town Planner
- Sarah Williams** – Guilford Land Conservation Trust
- Rick Conrad** – Guilford Land Conservation Trust
- Susan Ward** – Guilford Land Conservation Trust
- Donita Aruny** – Shoreline Arts Alliance
- Eric Dillner** – Shoreline Arts Alliance
- Vera Guibbory** – Guilford Green Merchants
- Kathryn Greene** – Guilford Green Merchants
- Janet Testa** – Guilford Chamber of Commerce
- Sandy Ruoff** – Guilford Free Library
- Patty Baldwin**- Guilford Free Library
- Paul Mei** – National Scenic Hiking Committee
- Maureen Belden** – Guilford Arts Center
- Susan Hens-Kaplan** – Guilford Arts Center
- Carolee Evans** – Guilford Land Acquisitions Commission

Tom Pinchbeck – Guilford Agricultural Commission
David Rosenthal – Guilford Agricultural Commission
Mike McBride – Henry Whitfield State Museum
Katherine Frydenborg – Hyland House
Pat Lovelace – Guilford Keeping Society, Medad Stone Tavern
Janet Dudley – Dudley Farm House Museum
Jerri Guadagno – Dudley Farm House Museum
Sally Miller – Dudley Farm House Museum
Kip Bergstrom – Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut Dept. of Economic and Community Development
Stuart Parnes – Executive Director, Connecticut Humanities Council
Helen Higgins – Executive Director, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation
Randy Fiveash – Director of Tourism, Connecticut Division of Tourism
Karin Peterson – Director of State Museums, Connecticut Dept. of Economic and Community Development

Assessment Objectives

The assessment visit was planned through several conference calls between Carolyn Brackett and the planning committee. The primary goal of the assessment visit was defined as an evaluation of resources and opportunities for development of heritage tourism in Guilford.

Objectives of the assessment visit were to:

- gather a wide variety of opinions and suggestions from partners
- learn about the community's history and culture
- evaluate the current visitor experience
- evaluate current visitor services including signage, operating hours, hospitality, etc.
- evaluate current local marketing efforts
- assess the level of public and private support for tourism
- assess organizational capacity for program development

Sustainable Tourism Includes Many Types of Tourism

Tourism is the world's largest industry. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism accounts for 10 percent of the worldwide gross domestic product. More people earn wages from tourism than any other employment sector (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2006).

Tourism is also very important to Connecticut's economy. "The Economic Impact of the Arts, Film, History and Tourism Industries in Connecticut" estimates travelers spend more than \$9 billion in the state each year - \$25 million daily. This spending includes lodging, recreation, meals, shopping, transportation, marina sales and gaming. Visitor spending generates \$1.15 billion in state and local tax revenue. Connecticut's tourism industry accounts for 110,000 jobs. (Source: Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis, December 2006 study of 2004 data – the most recent study available.)

Tourism is an ever-changing industry and spans many experiences. The fastest-growing segments focus on experiencing unique and authentic places and cultures while being sensitive to maintain or enhance the qualities that originally attracted visitors and contribute to a good quality of life for residents. Called *sustainable tourism*, such tourism encompasses many categories including cultural heritage, nature-based, community-based, outdoor recreation, agritourism and even "voluntourism" or vacation-based philanthropy. In contrast to mass-market tourism, such as cruise ships and theme parks, sustainable tourism stresses quality over quantity, favors unique experiences based on a place's resources (such as distinctive destinations, unspoiled landscapes and historic sites) and relies on locally owned businesses that circulate money in the local economy.

What creates a sense of place?

Those things that add up to a feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from anywhere else.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Sustainable tourism includes...

- *cultural tourism*
- *heritage tourism*
- *nature tourism*
- *community-based tourism*
- *outdoor recreation*
- *agritourism*
- *voluntourism*

Key Travel Trends

Cultural Heritage Travel

While the economic recession of recent years has had a tremendous impact on the travel industry, a study shows that cultural heritage travel continues to be a strong industry segment. *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler, 2009 Edition* found that 78 percent of U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling. This translates to 118.3 million adults each year. According to the study, cultural heritage travelers say they want:

- Travel experiences where the destination, its buildings and surroundings have retained their character.
- Travel to be educational – they make an effort to explore and learn about local arts, culture, environment and history.

Cultural heritage travelers spend an average of \$994 per trip compared to \$611 for other leisure travelers, making this a highly desirable travel industry segment. Cultural heritage travelers take an average of five trips per year vs. less than four trips for other travelers.

(Source: *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler, 2009 Edition*, conducted by Mandala Research, LLC for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the U.S. Cultural and Heritage Tourism Marketing Council, and the U.S. Department of Commerce)

CULTURAL AND HERITAGE ACTIVITIES	% of Travelers Engaged
Attend a fair or festival	68%
Visit historic buildings	67%
Visit historic sites	66%
Visit Native American sites	64%
Attend a re-enactment	64%
Visit history museums	61%
Visit living history museums	60%
Take a tour of local history	59%
Visit a natural history museum	59%
Visit an art museum or gallery	54%
Shop for local arts and crafts	51%
Take an architecture tour	49%
Experienced local or regional cuisine	40%
Visit state/national parks	41%
Explore small towns	40%
Take a self-guided walking tour	32%
Visit farms and ranches	32%
Explore an urban neighborhood	30%
Visit a farmers' market	27%
Take a scenic drive	24%

Ecotourism

According to the World Tourism Organization, ecotourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism market, with a 5 percent annual growth rate. Nationwide, in 2007, visitors spent \$11.79 billion in local regions surrounding national parks, supporting 244,400 jobs in gateway regions. National parks received 275.6 million visits in 2007, while the Forest Service had 204 million visitors.

Agritourism

According to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 23,350 farms provided agritourism and recreation services valued at \$566 million. Of the total farms, 3,637 farms indicated gross farm receipts of \$25,000 or more. (Ag Census Report: www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full_Report/usb1.pdf)

In addition to serving as an additional source of income, agritourism can benefit farmers and ranchers by 1) creating name recognition for agricultural products, 2) educating consumers about rural heritage and farming and ranching traditions, 3) generating financial incentives for the protection and enhancement of natural resources and natural amenities, and 4) generating economic development opportunities in neighboring communities by bringing tourists into town who may shop, eat and lodge locally. (Agricultural Marketing Resources, www.agmrc.org)

Outdoor Recreation

According to the Outdoor Foundation's *2010 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report*, 137.8 million Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2009 totaling 48.9 percent of Americans age six or older. Of this audience, the majority agree that preserving undeveloped land for outdoor recreation is important. A large percentage of outdoor participants also believe that developing local parks and hiking and walking trails is important and that there should be more outdoor education and activities during the school day.

Nationwide, participation in team sports and higher cost destination activities was generally down in 2009, while participation in human-powered outdoor activities, in many cases, increased significantly. Adventure racing, bow hunting, triathlon and whitewater kayaking all showed double-digit increases in participation. In response to a need for more cost-effective vacations, increasing numbers of Americans took to the outdoors for hiking, trail running and camping vacations.

(www.outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/TOF_ResearchParticipation2010.pdf?121)

Additional Travel Trends

A July 2011 survey found expectations for travel had declined to 27% expecting to take more leisure trips, down from 33 percent in January 2011. High gasoline and airfare prices were cited as the primary reason for this decrease. *The State of the American Traveler*, a quarterly survey produced by Destination Analysts, Inc. (www.destinationanalysts.com) finds among travelers who cut back on travel in the previous 12 months, “gasoline too expensive” is the top reason – 53.6%. Other reasons include “personal financial reasons” (48.9%), “airfare was too expensive” (38.9%), “too busy at work” (21.5%) and “didn’t have enough vacation time” (17.6%).

Staycations

Traveling close to home may not really be a new phenomenon, but with an economic recession in full swing by late 2008, the buzzword for travel quickly became “staycation.” Matt Wixon, author of *The Great American Staycation*, defines a staycation as “a vacation in which the vacationer stays at home or near home while creating the environment of a traditional vacation.” Near home usually refers to destinations or activities within a 100-mile range. Rising gas prices, overall economic concerns and lack of time (41% of Americans say they experience

“time poverty” according to the YPartnership 2008 Travel Monitor and Expedia survey) are all frequently cited reasons for not traveling.

The good news is studies show

people still want to travel and are finding ways to compensate: 18.8% say they will take at least one staycation a year (Destination Analysts, *State of the American Traveler Survey*, July 2011). Spotting this trend, tourism bureaus across the country are promoting staycations in their communities. Campaigns often use themes such as “Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown” and offer special events, tours or activities for residents in the community or state.

A July 2011 study showed that 61% of travelers listed “visiting friends and relatives” as their primary reason for travel (Destination Analysts, *State of the American Traveler Survey*). Educating residents about their hometowns through a staycation can transform them into ambassadors when they host guests or make travel recommendations to friends and family.

Travel Plans	Percentage
Look for travel discounts or bargains	58.1%
Visit generally less expensive destinations	28.8%
Reduce the number of leisure trips	25.8%
Reduce total days spent on leisure trips	22.1%
Shorten the distance of leisure trips	21.3%
Take at least one staycation	18.8%
Select less expensive modes of transportation	15.1%

The screenshot shows the VolunTourism.org website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for VolunTourism Trips, Inside VolunTourism.org, Resources, Global Education, Media, Contact Us, and Home. The main content area is titled "VolunTourism Trips" and features a large photo of a man in a grey t-shirt and blue jeans working on stone steps. To the right of the photo, there is text explaining the website's purpose and mentioning the founder, David Clemmons, and the "The VolunTourist Webcast". Below the photo, there is a caption: "Photo Courtesy Of Adventures In Preservation All Rights Reserved". The sidebar on the left contains several menu items, including "As Featured On The VolunTourist Webcast", "Journeys Within Our Community & VolunTourism", "10 Years Of Biosphere Expeditions & VolunTourism", "Advice On Multi-Generational & Family VolunTourism", and "VolunTourism Opportunities In Tucson, Arizona". At the bottom of the page, there is a section titled "About This Section Of VolunTourism.org" and a logo for "The VolunTourist A Weekly Webcast From VolunTourism.org".

Websites like www.voluntourism.org help travelers find vacation and volunteer opportunities.

Volunteer Vacations

According to Julie Leones, tourism researcher, Arizona Cooperative Extension, University of Arizona, more travelers are also giving back to destinations they visit by donating time, money, talent and their repeat business to protect and positively impact the cultures and environments they visit. More people are participating in voluntourism, a form of travel philanthropy in which travelers visit a destination and take part in projects within the local community. Projects are commonly nature-based, people-based or involve such activities as restoration or construction of buildings, removal of invasive species and planting trees. Websites like www.voluntourism.org help travelers find vacation and volunteer opportunities

Baby Boomer Travel

With 78 million baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) entering retirement in the coming years, this population segment is very important to the travel industry. A 2007 study by the AARP found that half of all baby boomers state that the desire to travel and explore new destinations is one of their "life goals." The study found that baby boomers make at least two trips each year.

Focus Factors for Guilford

Following are eight factors which should be addressed in the development of a successful heritage tourism plan. This report explores the opportunities and challenges presented by these factors and makes recommendations for action steps.

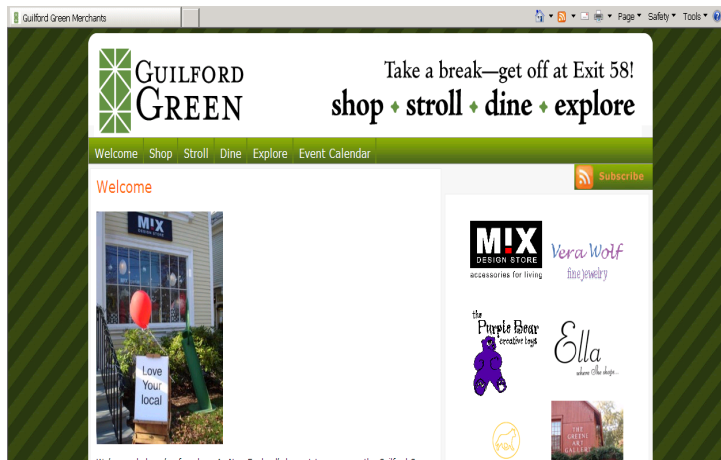
1. **Support must be built within the community for tourism.** Heritage tourism is a community-based approach to tourism development. The success of preserving Guilford's cultural, heritage and natural resources depends largely on community volunteers; therefore it is essential that Guilford residents understand the importance of tourism to the local economy and its role in the stewardship of resources.
2. **The question "Where can people spend money in Guilford?" must be answered.** Although dining establishments and retail businesses are plentiful, lodging must be increased to achieve the desired economic impact from tourism. When visitors stay overnight in a community, expenditures rise accordingly as they pay for a hotel room, B&B, lodge or camp site and buy more meals during a longer stay. Guilford currently has fewer than 100 rooms. A 30-40 room hotel recently opened in nearby Madison.
3. **Visitor research is needed.** Some visitor research data is available through the Connecticut Office of Tourism, but more information is needed on who is currently coming to Guilford and what their experience is while visiting. A better understanding of current visitors will help attract repeat visitation and target new audiences.
4. **Strong partnerships with state agencies and organizations should be developed.** State government agencies and statewide nonprofit organizations can bring tremendous resources to planning and implementing a heritage tourism program. These agencies and organizations receive continual requests for assistance from across the state; therefore, it is important for Guilford's leaders to get to know the appropriate contacts in each office and ensure that these contacts know what is happening in Guilford and how they can help.
5. **Guilford's historic house museums should offer a compelling visitor experience.** The five historic houses open to the public create an anchor around which a heritage tourism program can be built. These sites are currently facing numerous challenges and will need the community's support to continue to operate and to offer a compelling experience that makes visitors want to explore the rest of Guilford.

6. **A visitor services plan is needed.** One of the most important elements of a successful tourism program is making sure that visitors feel safe, comfortable and welcome in a community. Providing guidance, in the form of signage and visitor information, is needed to achieve this comfort level.



Making information available on things to see and do is an important part of a community's visitor services plan.

7. **Retail businesses must understand the needs of tourists.** An active Guilford Green Merchants group and efforts by the Guilford Chamber of Commerce have made great strides in promotions to visitors. Continual education is needed to ensure merchants understand the importance of working together on promotions and they know how to meet the unique needs of tourists.



The Guilford Green Merchants Association has been actively promoting downtown retail and dining through a website, advertising and other promotional venues.

8. **A marketing plan should be created to attract tourists to Guilford.** At present, there are a variety of efforts being made to reach tourists through web sites and advertisements. There is no cohesive plan about what messages are being communicated about Guilford and what visitor audience is being targeted. Additionally, there no tracking system to gauge the success of these efforts.

Evaluations and Recommendations for Heritage Tourism Development in Guilford

I. Create a tourism awareness and involvement plan for residents.

As noted in *Principle 2 for Successful Heritage Tourism Development*, finding the fit between the community and tourism will make a community a better place to live as well as a better place to visit. It is critical to balance the needs of residents and visitors and to consider how much tourism a community can accommodate.

There are many benefits to finding the fit such as:

- A successful heritage tourism program encourages local investment.
- Residents learn about and take pride in their community's history.
- Preservation of irreplaceable historic resources becomes a priority.
- Residents can benefit from the creation of new jobs and volunteer opportunities.
- Residents have an opportunity to share their vision and become actively involved in a heritage tourism program.

Interviews conducted during the assessment visit revealed many reasons for developing a community-based heritage tourism program for Guilford as well as identifying concerns that must be addressed. Comments shared during interviews include:

- The Town of Guilford is funded by property taxes. There are no local lodging or restaurant taxes. Because a balanced budget is required, property tax hikes occur regularly to meet the town's funding needs.
- Concerns were expressed about potential adverse impacts of tourism development.
- There is a need to "sell" the idea of tourism to residents to build support for tourism growth.
- Attractions, programs and events in Guilford depend on volunteers, making it essential that residents support the idea of tourism development.
- The potential closing or transfer of management of the Whitfield State Museum requires a response from Guilford to help determine the site's future.
- There have been previous efforts to form tourism committees. Since these efforts did not last long-term, there is a need to convince residents that these new heritage tourism efforts are strongly supported by the local government and leading community organizations.
- Some local business owners already understand the importance of catering to tourists, while others need to be educated on what tourists need and expect.
- Local merchants want to promote staycations to Guilford residents.

Heritage tourism programs emerge from a base of leadership that is engaged in heritage tourism planning and development. Guilford is fortunate to have leadership from many sectors including government, heritage, preservation, conservation and arts organizations and local businesses. In the business world (most often referencing using new technology but applicable in other areas), these people are referred to as innovators and “early adopters” – visionaries who see the benefits of heritage tourism and embrace the idea wholeheartedly.

Guilford is fortunate to have “early adopters” - visionaries who see the benefits of heritage tourism and embrace the idea wholeheartedly.

This group is usually followed by the “early majority” – people who hear the message, consider its merits and respond positively. Following this are two groups that are more difficult to win over – the “late majority” which may be skeptical of change or new directions and “laggards” who may form negative opinions based on rumor or misinformation. (Source: *Diffusion of Innovations*, Everett M. Rogers)

Develop Communications Messages and Methods

Building support among Guilford’s residents is a three-step process:

1. Develop the message – What do residents need to know about tourism in Guilford?

Based on both the enthusiasm and concern expressed about tourism development, the planning committee should develop a clear message about what will be accomplished through a heritage tourism program. Considerations to keep in mind in developing the message are:

- **What are specific project goals?** Beyond stating tourism’s benefit to the local economy, what are specific goals – saving a historic house museum, developing a walking tour, starting a new event or festival, increasing sales at local retail shops?
- **How will visitor services be provided?** What are plans to provide adequate parking and signage? How will problems like congestion or littering be addressed?
- **What opportunities are there for involvement?** How can residents become involved in Guilford’s heritage tourism efforts?
- **How will success be measured?** What indicators will be tracked to determine the heritage tourism program’s success? More jobs? More visitors? New businesses? Preserving historic buildings? Other indicators?

2. Share the message – How will residents be reached to tell them about tourism plans and recruit their involvement?

Once a set of clear messages is developed, the next step is deciding on ways to reach residents. This should be done in a variety of ways – some people get all their information from local media or the Internet while others like to attend meetings and others get information from organizations to which they belong. A key part of sharing the message is including a call-to-action to let visitors know how they can become involved.

3. **Plan for continual follow up** – How will residents know what is happening with the heritage tourism program?

In addition to sharing the message and asking for feedback from residents, it is imperative that a plan for continual follow up be developed. Residents must have a way to find out if their concerns were addressed or if their ideas were adopted. They should also be able to get updates on how plans are progressing and what results are emerging from the heritage tourism program.

Following are strategies to increase resident awareness and involvement in Guilford’s heritage tourism planning and implementation.

Plan a Doors Open Event

There is an old saying in the tourism industry: “No one is a tourist in his own hometown.” That has changed in recent years with the increasing cost of gasoline and the economic recession spurring vacations closer to home. This provides a great opportunity to encourage residents to get to know the historic, cultural and natural resources in their own community. One way to do is to plan a “Doors Open” event. Doors Open is similar to a staycation because it encourages residents to explore the area where they live. But while staycation promotions may extend year-round, Doors Open occurs in a particular timeframe - such as a weekend - on an annual schedule.

Doors Open began in France in 1984 to encourage residents to have a greater appreciation of French heritage. The annual event offers free admission, behind-the-scenes tours and special programs. The concept has spread to 48 European countries (www.heritagedays.net). Heritage Canada also offers organizational assistance to communities. (www.heritagecanada.org/en/visit-discover/doors-open-canada).

GPA’s new walking tours would provide a great place to start planning a Doors Open event. Residents could be invited to take the tours for free over a weekend as part of Doors Open if they brought a friend from out of town who purchased a ticket. Similar opportunities could be planned at all of Guilford’s historic sites. The event could be supplemented by special offerings at restaurants and in retail stores.



Guilford’s new historic walking tours could be part of a Doors Open event to encourage residents to enjoy their town’s history.
Photo: Guilford Preservation Alliance

Case Studies

Trails & Sails: Essex National Heritage Area Hosts Event

The Essex National Heritage Area encompasses 34 communities in Essex County, Massachusetts. The Heritage Area management entity works with numerous partners to host a Doors Open event called “Trails & Sails” in September to showcase the area’s cultural, natural and historic resources. The 2012 event will take place over two weekends and is billed as



Trails & Sails began as an event targeting residents and now draws tourists as well. *Photo: Essex National Heritage Area*

“Trails and Sails: Two Weekends of Walks and Water.” Over 200 free events are offered among 140 of Essex County’s sites. Opportunities for outdoor adventures include biking, hiking, boating and kayaking. Tours of historic homes, museums and art galleries are also offered. The event program codes activities as outdoor activities, kid-oriented, free admission, self-guided or guided. All events are free. www.essexheritage.org.

Doors Open Denver Offers Behind-the-Scenes Tours

The Denver Office of Cultural Affairs and Denver Architectural Foundation organize Doors Open for Denver, Colorado. The 2012 weekend event had the theme “Denver Landmarks” with more than 70 architecturally significant buildings open for free tours. The event offered the opportunity to tour buildings that are not usually open to the public. The event also includes a photography contest and a scavenger hunt. Participants enjoyed three options:

- **Self-guided** – Sites that can be toured independently including historic homes, public buildings, cemeteries, schools and civic buildings.
- **Urban Adventures** - 12 self-guided tours are offered on a variety of themes such as “Family Fun,” “Great Outdoors,” “Art and Architecture Spaces,” and “Places of Worship.”
- **Expert Tours** - Tours guided by experts (pre-registration and ticket required) included options such as “Behind the Scenes Sneak Peek of the History Colorado Center,” “Downtown Denver Landmarks,” “Historic Sixteenth Street” and “Denver’s Public Art and Architecture: The Journey of a City Beautiful.”



A photography contest is part of Doors Open Denver’s activities. *Photo: Chris Swallow*

www.denvergov.org/doorsopendenver

Host Community Forums to Discuss Heritage Tourism Plans

The centerpiece of tourism planning for Guilford should be civic engagement - giving residents an opportunity to not only learn about heritage tourism plans but to share their ideas. GPA and its partners should plan to host one or more community forums in the coming year. A meeting agenda would include:

- Overview of plans for heritage tourism in Guilford
- Explanation of why well-managed tourism growth would benefit Guilford
- Examples of successful heritage tourism programs in similar-size communities
- Discussion sessions – breakout groups to discuss topics such as:
 - What are the important stories of Guilford they would like to share with visitors?
 - Where can those stories be shared?
 - What existing activities can be further developed – or new activities (events, programs, sites) can be developed to appeal to visitors?
 - What concerns do residents have about tourism growth? (traffic, too many people, damaging historic resources?)
 - What activities would residents like to participate in as part of tourism program? (volunteering at historic sites, developing a new event, finding a job?)



Engaging the public is an essential part of the heritage tourism planning process.

Following each meeting, GPA and its partners should meet to review the input given at the meeting and develop action steps to include in the heritage tourism plan to address ideas and concerns.

Create a volunteer bank

The majority of meetings during the assessment visit were with nonprofit organizations – arts, historic sites and land conservation – that depend on volunteers to achieve their mission. Volunteering is an important activity for many people as it allows them to make a contribution to the quality of life in their community and to affiliate with others who have similar interests. According to a report by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 64.3 million people volunteered at least once between September 2010 and September 2011. (Source: *Supplement to the Current Population Survey, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service*) Other findings in the report include:

- Women volunteer at a higher rate than men across all age groups, education levels and other major demographic characteristics. (29.9% vs. 23.5%)
- Those age 35-44 and 45-54 were most likely to volunteer (31.8% and 30.6% respectively).
- Those in their early 20s were least likely to volunteer (19.4%).

- Volunteers – both women and men – spent a median of 51 hours on volunteer activities during the period from September 2010 and September 2011. Median annual hours spent on volunteer activities ranged from a high of 96 hours for volunteers age 65 and over to a low of 32 hours for those 25-34 years old.
- Most volunteers were involved with either one or two organizations – 69.6% and 19.4%, respectively. Individuals with higher educational attainment were more likely to volunteer for multiple organizations than those with less education.
- The organization for which volunteers worked the most hours during the year was most frequently religious (33.2%), followed by education or youth services related (25.7%). Another 14.3% volunteered for social or community service organizations.
- The main activity performed by volunteers was fundraising (11%) followed by collecting, preparing, distributing or serving food (10.6%).
- 41.9% became involved with their main organization after being asked to volunteer, usually by someone in the organization. About 41.6% became involved on their own initiative.

Why do people volunteer?

Before beginning to recruit volunteers, it is important to understand why people are motivated to give their time to an organization or a project. Understanding these reasons will be helpful in appealing to residents so they know volunteer opportunities meet their goals in volunteering. Three key reasons are:

- **Belief in the Project**

Volunteers have a strong belief in the goals of a project or program.

- **Opportunity to Affiliate**

Volunteering also offers the opportunity to socialize with others who share the same commitment and interest. Plan occasions that allow volunteers to get to know each other and build a strong camaraderie.

- **Enjoy Recognition**

People appreciate recognition of their volunteer service. Whether it is a thank you note or a full-scale awards ceremony, let volunteers know their efforts are appreciated.

(To see the complete report, visit www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm)

Steps to create a volunteer bank include:

1. **Inventory opportunities for volunteers at heritage, cultural and outdoor sites.** A committee could be formed to inventory historic, cultural and outdoor sites to document volunteer opportunities. Categories might include assisting with events, programs and festivals; fundraising, publicity, giving tours, historical research, stewardship (such as clean up days, planting trees, etc.), cataloging artifacts, serving on the board or a committee and other opportunities. Both short-term and long-term volunteer opportunities should be included.

2. **Create a volunteer database.** Once the information is collected, an area on the GPA website (or other appropriate website) could be developed to host a volunteer database. The database could begin as a simple listing of volunteer opportunities and contact information. As the site is developed, the database could be designed to be searchable. This would allow potential volunteers to look for opportunities matching their interests, skills and available time for volunteering. The database would need to be updated regularly to ensure current information is available to potential volunteers.
3. **Publicize the database.** Once the database is developed, publicize this resource in local media, Facebook, through participating site websites and newsletters and other venues.
4. **Track use of the database.** Ask participating organizations to document when they have new volunteers to track whether they learned about the volunteer opportunity through the database.

Use the new Historic Guilford website as a forum for residents to share

GPA has recently developed a new website, www.historicguilford.org, to promote the walking tours and share information about Guilford's history. The website can be enhanced by inviting residents to share their stories – what they love about Guilford, activities they are involved in such as volunteering at a historic site or helping with a festival, their experiences in hosting friends and family in Guilford, etc. This section could be “seeded” by inviting submissions from the students who are giving the walking tours, volunteers at historic sites, members of the GPA board or others who could help to start building this section of the website. The addition of pictures submitted by the authors can also enhance the stories.

Case Study

Lake Champlain Scenic Byway

Promoters of the Lake Champlain Scenic Byway in Vermont created a section on their website (<http://lakechamplainbyway.com/>) called “Ask a Local.” The section includes “testimonies” from locals on hiking, biking, farms, wineries, cultural activities, winter sports, architecture and museums.



Develop Communications Strategies

Guilford is already attracting visitors who come to shop, tour historic sites, attend a festival, enjoy a hike or a race or other activities. Even with this visitation, the idea of coordinated and proactive tourism plan is a new one for Guilford, and residents will likely have lots of questions about why tourism growth is needed and what it will mean for the community.

Sharing the concept, plans and results in a variety of ways will reach more residents to inform and engage them. Communications materials can include:

- **Traveling exhibit** – Develop a movable exhibit that includes historic and current pictures of Guilford, a map and text on the community’s history as well as information on tourism plans. The exhibit should be moved periodically to locations throughout the community such as the library, banks, community center and other places where it will be seen by residents.
- **Printed brochure or flyer** – A simple brochure or flyer would have brief information about tourism plans, a list of partners and contact information to find out how to get involved. These could be printed in large quantities to allow partners to distribute them when they attend meetings or to place in public places such as the library or community center.
- **Speaker’s bureau** – A 15-20 minute Powerpoint presentation could be developed for use by partners in speaking to civic groups, government committees and others with an interest in tourism development.



An exhibit highlighting local history can be a good way to engage residents in heritage tourism planning.
Photo: Cane River National Heritage Area

II. Coordinate Historic House Museums' Visitor Experience and Promotions

Guilford is fortunate to have five outstanding historic house museums:

- **Henry Whitfield State Museum** - owned and operated by the State Historic Preservation Office in Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development
- **Hyland House** –owned and operated by the Dorothy Whitfield Historic Society
- **Dudley Farm House Museum** – owned and operated by the Dudley Foundation
- **Medad Stone Tavern House Museum** and **Thomas Griswold House Museum** - owned and operated by the Guilford Keeping Society.

Collectively these sites create an “anchor” for heritage tourism in Guilford. The Whitfield House also functions as a tourist information center with bright blue “Tourist Info” signs in town directing visitors to the site.

Besides being important sites in Guilford's history, they also share many of the same challenges faced by the estimated 15,000 historic house museums in the United States. In 2007, the *Forum on Historic Site Stewardship in the 21st Century* was held at Kykuit, (the historic Rockefeller Estate in New York's Hudson River Valley, owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation). A group of historic site professionals and representatives from associations that work with historic sites gathered to discuss the future of the country's historic sites. Although there was no consensus on whether historic sites are truly in crisis, there was recognition that many historic sites are facing declining attendance, financial instability and poor stewardship, and they are increasingly viewed by their communities as irrelevant and unresponsive to the social changes around them. (*The Call for a National Conversation*, James Vaughan, former Vice President for Stewardship of Historic Sites, National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Forum Journal*, Spring 2008.)



Guilford is fortunate to have five historic house museums including the Hyland House, as well as dedicated volunteers like Katherine Frydenborg.

The “conundrum” is in trying to understand why, if cultural heritage travel is an ever-growing segment of the travel industry, many historic sites are struggling? There are several possible answers to this question:

- A cultural heritage travel experience is no longer defined as only visiting traditional historic sites. Research shows tourists can fit the definition of a cultural heritage traveler when they travel a scenic byway, stay in a historic B&B, enjoy dinner or shopping in restored downtown buildings, take a walking tour through a historic neighborhood, visit an artist’s studio or attend a local music festival. None of these activities involves actually touring a historic site, but these tourists are clearly cultural heritage travelers.
- The number of historic sites continues to increase. When many historic sites are located close together (as is the case in Guilford), offering unique experiences at each site becomes even more important.
- Historic sites hours/days/months of operation don’t always fit tourists’ schedules. Research shows that more than 50 percent of travel is on the weekend, and more than 50 percent of travelers make their travel plans one month or less in advance. In addition, with the advent of new technology, tourists are making even more decisions about what to see and do after they arrive at a destination. Because of the dependence on volunteers to open the site and give tours, many historic sites have limited hours, days and months of operation, meaning tourists may want to visit but cannot because the site is not open when they are in town.
- Promotions of historic sites are often limited to a brochure and a website or Facebook page. Few historic sites have the budget to hire a marketing director or have a staff member or volunteer who can devote the time to building partnerships in the tourism industry to promote the site.

(Source: Adapted from *Cultural Heritage Tourism Trends Affecting Historic Sites*, Amy Webb and Carolyn Brackett, National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program, *Forum Journal*, Spring 2008.)

In this section, we will look at the operations and some of the challenges of Guilford’s historic house museums and recommend strategies to help support and develop the sites as a cornerstone of Guilford’s heritage tourism program.

Currently the sites operate in the following ways:

Historic Site	Days and Hours	Months	Other Times	Admission
Whitfield State Museum	Wed-Sun 10:00 – 4:30 p.m.	May 2 – Dec. 14	Tours by appointment year-round	\$8 adults \$6 seniors (60 years +) and college students with ID \$5 youth (6-17) 5 and under free Discount for schools and groups.
Hyland House	Tues - Fri Noon– 4:30 p.m. Sat 11:00 a.m. – 4:30p.m. Sun Noon – 4:30 p.m. <hr/> Sat 11 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Sun Noon – 4:30 p.m.	June 5 – Sept. 2 <hr/> Sept. 8 – Oct. 7	Tours also by appointment May - October	Free – donations accepted
Medad Stone House Tavern			Open by appointment and for special events	
Griswold House Museum	Tues – Sun 11a.m. - 4 p.m. <hr/> Sat - Sun 11a.m. - 4 p.m.	June – Sept. <hr/> Oct.		\$3 adults \$2 seniors Free – 11 and younger
Dudley Farm	Thurs, Fri, Sat 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Sun 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.	May – Oct.	Other hours by appointment	\$3 adults Free – under 16

Looking at this chart yields several observations:

- There are only five months in the year (May through September) when all sites are open to welcome visitors.
- No sites are open on Monday (unless those offering appointments include Monday)
- Hours and days of operation vary widely ranging from only on weekends to a six-day schedule depending on the time of year.
- Revenues from admission are likely to be a negligible part of the overall site budget due to free or low cost admission.

Each site has numerous activities and programs under way to attract people from the local area as well as visitors and, most important, to help generate funds to preserve and operate the site. A sampling of events, programs and activities includes:

- Dudley Farm – Farmers’ market selling food and handcrafts from Connecticut. The market includes demonstrations such as soap and candle making and instruction on how to make corn relish or how to arrange flowers.
- Whitfield Museum – Develops changing exhibits such as an exhibit on the history of Thanksgiving. (Exhibits are not currently being developed due to budget cuts.)
- Hyland House – Holds an annual antiques show.
- Medad Stone House Tavern – Started a community garden. Participants were required to join the Guilford Keeping Society in return for gardening space.
- Griswold House – Hosts a Christmas open house in early December.



The Farmer’s Market at Dudley Farm is one of many activities offered at Guilford’s historic sites throughout the year.

Photo: Judy Stone, Dudley Farm

In addition to planning and hosting numerous events and programs, keeping the sites open for tours and reaching out to a young audience through school programs, there is the ongoing challenge of preserving these historic structures and the collections they house. Recent preservation/conservation projects have included putting a new roof on the house at Dudley Farm, cleaning the Griswold House’s interior after a furnace malfunction and cataloging 5,000 glass plate negatives of Guilford at the Medad Stone Tavern.

During the assessment visit meeting with historic site representatives, site representatives shared several “dreams” including:

- Reach more visitors by opening sites more often.
- Have a better understanding of current and potential visitors.
- Offer a rich and compelling visitor experience.
- Take sites to the next level by positioning them in broad historic terms (i.e. Whitfield House as the “Center for the Study of Settlement in Connecticut” or the Dudley Farm as a living history laboratory.)

Also agreed upon was the desire to work together wherever possible to help all of the sites and to build tourism for Guilford. It was noted that a previous partnership event, Twilight Tours, included all five museums and was very popular for the first few years. Site managers are considering starting the event again – perhaps offering it every three to five years and adding new activities to attract residents.

Following are recommendations to help Guilford’s historic sites work together and, over time, to design a tour experience to attract increasing numbers of visitors to Guilford and to the sites:

Offer Uniform Hours/Days/Months of Operation

A key element of tourism marketing is making it easy for visitors to plan their trip. The variety of hours, days and months that Guilford’s historic sites are open can be confusing to a visitor – and disappointing if they are not able to tour a site because it is closed during their visit. Recognizing that it will likely take time to make the transition, it is recommended that sites work together to examine their operating schedules and try to more closely align their operations – particularly hours and days.

For example, if a visitor can go to a Guilford website and see that all sites are open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesdays through Sundays, from May through October, it will make it much easier to plan a trip. Additionally, sites should consider working toward opening in March and April to extend the visitor season. Without a doubt, this will require more volunteers and will take time to achieve. (Please see the section on creating a tourism awareness and involvement plan for ideas on building a volunteer base.)



Working toward more uniform operating schedules will benefit all historic sites. Pictured are Rob Vavasour, Guilford Preservation Alliance and Sally Miller, Dudley Farm.

Apply for Grants for Planning and Preservation

Connecticut's historic sites are extremely fortunate to have several organizations in the state which support planning and preservation of historic sites. These include:

- **Connecticut Humanities Council** – The CHC Heritage Revitalization Fund offers grants for planning to strengthen internal operations and foster collaboration through resource sharing and program partnerships. In the historic sites meeting during the assessment visit, CHT Executive Director Stuart Parnes gave an example of a group of historic sites in another part of the state that met to consider how they could work together. With CHT funding, they were able to hire a facilitator for their meetings which resulted in a project to develop a new brochure to collectively promote the sites. Parnes shared application guidelines with the Guilford group and encouraged submission of a grant application. Mike McBride, director of Whitfield State Museum, agreed to review the information and follow up with the sites to discuss an application. It is strongly recommended that this be pursued and an application for facilitation of strategic planning be submitted.

www.ctculture.org/chc/program_resources/grant_seekers.html)

- **Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and Connecticut Humanities Council** – The Connecticut Trust (the state's nonprofit statewide preservation organization) and CHC jointly offer Heritage Preservation Technical Assistance Grants. These grants fund activities such as historic structure reports, structural and engineering analyses of historic resources, planning to strengthen an organization and projects or programs that increase expertise in preservation. For those sites which have not completed a condition assessment of the historic site in recent years, this grant category could provide funding to complete a study and identify preservation needs. (In 2011, the Dorothy Whitfield Society received a strategic planning grant for the Hyland House and a capital needs assessment was awarded for the Medad Stone Tavern barn under this grant program.)



The Medad Stone Tavern received a Heritage Preservation Technical Assistance Grant for a capital needs assessment in 2011. The grant program offers assistance in many areas that can be helpful to Guilford's historic house museums.

- www.ctculture.org/chc/program_resources/grant_seekers/heritage_preservation_technical_assistance_grants.html)

In addition to these resources, the Connecticut Humanities Council and the Connecticut League of History Organizations are currently supporting StePS-CT, (Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations), a new program designed by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) specifically for small museums, historical societies and cultural organizations. The program provides curriculum and a mentor to help history organizations evaluate and build a stronger organization.

Twenty-five sites in Connecticut are enrolled in the 2012-2013 class. Since this represents full enrollment for the next two years, Guilford's historic house museums are encouraged to consider registering directly with AASLH to take the course as soon as possible. Enrollment is \$150 for AASLH institutional members and \$265 for non-members. (<http://aaslh.org/steps.htm>)

Enroll in AASLH Visitors Count Program

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) is a national, nonprofit organization dedicated to providing training, networking and resources to those who work in the field of state and local history. (www.aaslh.org). There are many resources available through AASLH. One that can be of great help to Guilford's historic house museums is *Visitors Count*.



Visitors Count includes a visitor survey and professional data analysis for historic houses and museums. *Visitors Count* helps historic sites identify what they must do to create a positive visitor experience. Sites are also able to compare their performance against other historic sites. *Visitors Count* is particularly effective for multiple properties that share common links and want to consistently track information. There have been more than 140 participating institutions including group projects in Texas, Alaska and Kentucky. (www.aaslh.org/visitorscount.htm)

Plan for Collections Care

All of Guilford's historic house museums have irreplaceable collections of historic artifacts. Site managers have a strong commitment to the care of these collections. Collections care varies depending on the site. The Guilford Keeping Society is in the process of converting space at Medad Stone Tavern into a climate-controlled archival storage room. The Historical Room at the Guilford Free Library is also the repository for documents from the collections of the Guilford Keeping Society and Guilford Preservation Alliance. None of the historic house museums showed evidence of climate controlled facilities for larger artifacts such as furniture.

Although documentation of what existed in the past is possible through digital records, there is no substitute for seeing the actual artifact. It is a tribute to the dedication of staff and volunteers at the sites that these artifacts and archival materials have been saved. These collections – along with the historic buildings – are tangible reminders of Guilford's culture and heritage.

To ensure these artifacts and archives will be available for many years into the future, it is recommended the sites begin a proactive process of conservation planning. There are many organizations which provide resources – including books, technical assistance and training – to help in this process. Resources include:

- ***AAM Guide to Collections Planning*** – This publication by the American Association of Museums provides guidance on developing a collections plan for a museum. www.amazon.com/AAM-Guide-Collections-Planning/dp/0931201888
- ***Collections Management and Practices*** – This workshop is offered periodically by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and is presented by curators and conservators. www.aaslh.org/collwork.htm
- ***The Basics of Archives*** – This is an online workshop offered by AASLH. It provides training in how to manage and protect archival collections. This beginning level course is designed for staff and volunteers at historical organizations and libraries with minimal or no experience in managing archival collections. Check the website for upcoming dates: www.aaslh.org/basicsofarchives.htm



All of Guilford's historic house museums have remarkable collections such as the kitchen equipment shown by Jerri Guadagno at Dudley Farm and these furnishings at Medad Stone Tavern.

- **Museum Assessment Program** – The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is offered by the American Association of Museums with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS – a federal agency) to assist museums of all sizes to improve in planning and operations through self-study and peer review. There are three types of assessments offered through MAP – organization, collections stewardship and community engagement. The **collections stewardship MAP assessment** is recommended for museums which do not currently have collections policies and procedures. The scope of the assessment includes collections care and use, acquisitions and deaccessioning, legal, ethical and safety issues, documentation, inventory and emergency planning. For museums with budgets of less than \$125,000 annually, MAP is *free* to the museum. MAP provides an estimated \$4,000 in services to the museum including a self-study workbook, peer reviewer travel expenses and honorarium and access to AAM webinars during the approximately one-year assessment process. For complete information applying for a MAP assessment, please see www.aam-us.org/museumresources/map/index.cfm.

Enhance the Visitor Experience

A challenge faced by historic house museums across the country is trying to implement a plan that often goes like this:

- ⇒ Respond to a threatened historic home by rallying local supporters to save it.
- ⇒ The building is saved – Now we have an empty building that once was someone’s home. What do we do with it?
- ⇒ The decision is made – make it into a museum!
- ⇒ Restore the building as much as possible, hopefully following good preservation standards.
- ⇒ If there aren’t any furnishings, find antiques “of the period” somewhere to fill the rooms.
- ⇒ Find out the history of the family who lived there.
- ⇒ Write a script telling about the furniture and the family.
- ⇒ Recruit volunteers (or paid guides, if funds permit) to learn the script, give tours and keep the site open as much as possible.
- ⇒ Work continually to raise enough money to keep the site going.



Communities often rally around saving an important historic house as was the case with the Edgar Allan Poe house in Baltimore.

Following this sequence of events, it is easy to see what often gets lost in all the activity is consideration of the visitor experience. Although time did not permit tours (as a visitor would take a tour) of each historic house museum during the assessment visit, the meeting with historic site managers confirmed the focus is on preservation of the buildings and collections and planning and hosting events to raise funds for the sites’ operation.

However, all of the sites attract tourists – visitors from out of town (or internationally) who want to tour the site and learn about its history. As plans progress for heritage tourism in Guilford, the historic house museums’ place as a centerpiece of the visitor experience will continue to grow, making consideration of enhanced tours a key part of the planning process.

As noted in the publication *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites*, sites must answer two key questions: “What does our site illustrate best about the past?” and “How can we use our resources to amplify and communicate our site’s historical messages?” The authors continue by noting that understanding a historic site’s story and making the best use of all of its resources, including buildings, landscape, collections – and people – are the “essential foundation for creating informative, memorable guided tours at historic sites.” (www.amazon.com/Great-Tours-Thematic-Training-Association/dp/0759100985)

There are many resources available to help design new tour programs for historic house museums. The historic house museums should work together to identify an interpretive specialist who can help with designing new tours of all sites to complement each other while offering unique experiences at each site.

Examples of consultant firms specializing in interpretive planning are:

- Engaging Places – <http://engagingplaces.net/about/>
- John Veverka and Associates - <http://www.heritageinterp.com/>
- Germann and Associates Museum Consultants - www.germann-museumconsultants.com/index.html

(Note: Please see the section on tourism marketing for recommendations related to promotion.)

Henry Whitfield House State Museum



The Henry Whitfield House State Museum faces an uncertain future at the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development evaluates whether to continue to own and operate the site.

The Henry Whitfield House State Museum is Connecticut's first state museum and the oldest house in Connecticut. Opening in 1904, the site is owned and operated by the State of Connecticut and is currently managed through the State Historic Preservation Office in the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD).

At its peak, the site drew as many as 10,000 visitors annually. In recent years, due to a decrease in days open to the public, the number has declined to about 6,000 visitors. Visitors come to tour the historic home but also because the site serves as a visitor center, with "Tourist Info" signs around town leading to the site.

In addition to decreasing tour days, the site has also had staff reductions. The curator was reassigned to another job in Hartford. The site currently has one full-time staff person (Michael McBride, executive director) and one part-time staff person. In addition to managing all administrative and operational functions of the site, they must also be available to give tours. In previous years, temporary exhibits were placed in the visitor center and education building to engage schoolchildren and to encourage visitation by tourists. Exhibits cannot currently be developed due to budget cuts.

Although budget cuts, decreased days of operation and reduced staffing are cause for great concern, the primary focus is the future of the site. DECD currently manages four state-owned museums (in addition to the Whitfield House, these include Old New-Gate Prison and Coppermine in East Granby, the Prudence Crandall Museum in Canterbury and the Sloane- Stanley Museum in Kent).

In a meeting with Kip Bergstrom, DECD Deputy Commissioner, Bergstrom shared DECD plans to evaluate its role in managing historic sites and to consider options for future management. Options might include transferring one or more of the sites to a different entity (public or private) to operate, providing an endowment and completing repairs to sites before transfer, and obtaining advice on properties that DECD will continue to manage on how to enrich the visitor experience. Plans call for hiring a consultant in the coming months to conduct a study, look at a variety of operational models of historic sites and make recommendations to DECD on how to proceed.



In addition to being an important historic site, the Whitfield House also plays an important role as Guilford's visitor center. Pictured is Shirley Girioni, Guilford Preservation Alliance.

In the meeting with historic house museum representatives, the potential impact of closing the Whitfield House was clear. Site managers agreed that Whitfield House was a tremendous resource in drawing visitors to Guilford. Having a visitor center at Whitfield House benefited all of the sites when visitors to Whitfield House learned about the other historic sites and subsequently visited.

At the same time, all site representatives agreed they are already stretched in managing their own sites, and it would not be possible for any of them to take on the Whitfield House Museum to manage.

A further complicating factor is, because it is a state-owned property, there is no volunteer or

membership base in place to create a ready-made constituency to confer with state officials about the site's future.

Without knowing the recommendations of the yet-to-be-conducted DECD research study, but being aware of the state's desire to manage fewer historic properties, at this point Guilford's heritage tourism partners can only consider possible outcomes and responses. These might include decisions by the state to:

- Determine either a local Guilford group takes over the site or it will close.
- Continue operating the site at the level of current operations.
- Continue operating the site with an increased level of operations to enhance the visitor experience.

A subcommittee of the heritage tourism planning committee should be created to monitor the situation. The subcommittee should take several steps:

- Request to be included in the DECD research study.
- Prepare information to contribute to the study on the importance of Whitfield Museum to the local community and to the tourism economy of Guilford.
- Consider the possible outcomes and formulate a response to each including a strategy for keeping the site open through new management if the state divests itself of the site.

III. Position the Town Green as a primary destination in Guilford

Today's Town Green is very different in appearance than in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries when the grounds included everything from a whipping post to grazing cattle to graves of early settlers. Over the centuries, the Green has transitioned into a beautiful public park. According to the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation (www.towngreens.com),



The Town Green is the center of Guilford and offers an appealing destination for visitors to shop, dine and enjoy Guilford's historic setting.

Guilford's Town Green is a rectangular shape measuring a little less than 12 acres, bordered by Park Street, Broad Street, Whitfield Street and Boston Street. The Green is shaded by over 100 trees. A large Civil War memorial (1877) stands near the center. Smaller memorials are scattered throughout the grounds including memorials to those who served in the Revolutionary War, Spanish American War, World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Framing the Green are private residences, churches and retail stores, restaurants and offices as well as Town Hall and the

Guilford Free Library. Surrounding the streets are historic neighborhoods with homes from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Additionally, the Green is the setting for numerous events throughout the year including community activities such as the Boy Scouts' Strawberry Social and a summertime community picnic. The Guilford Art Center's annual Craft Expo is the largest event on the Green, drawing around 10,000 people over a four-day period each July. More than 170 artists sell handmade crafts made in clay, glass, leather, metal, fiber and other materials.

This density of business, civic places and residences and the frequency of special events (including the new walking tours) and the nearby train station make the Green a scene of constant activity, attracting residents and visitors to enjoy all that is offered in these historic surroundings. The new federally designated New England National Scenic Trail which passes through Guilford, promises to bring even more visitors to the town.

The next step is to capitalize on the history, beauty and available activities in downtown Guilford by positioning the Town Green as a primary destination for tourists. Downtowns of all sizes and in locations across the country have become vibrant tourism destinations which draw travelers to enjoy an authentic visitor experience, learn the community's story (past and present), enjoy local cultural programs and events and shop and dine – making downtowns an important economic driver for the communities.

In the mid-1970s, concerned about the economic decline in downtowns across the country – and the subsequent deterioration or loss of many communities’ historic building infrastructure – the National Trust for Historic Preservation launched the Main Street Project. This pilot program was intended to study the reasons for the decline of downtowns and to develop a comprehensive revitalization strategy to save these historic town centers. In the past 3½ decades, the National Trust Main Street Center has worked with more than 1,600 communities to revitalize their downtowns.

The intertwined approach seeks to restore historic buildings and find new, economically viable uses for these structures. By the mid-1980s, as many communities successfully brought their downtowns back to life, another – perhaps unforeseen – outcome began to be observed: visitors were finding their way to these charming, inviting downtowns. As many downtown advocates discovered, downtowns can be a destination if they offer an experience that enhances a visitor’s travels.

An important distinction must be made between making a downtown a *sustainable tourism destination* and what is often referred to as a *tourist town*. A *sustainable tourism destination* offers a vibrant downtown that is a living part of the community including places where residents can live, work, shop and dine and that reflects residents’ pride in preserving their community’s historic resources and cultural heritage. These same attributes will attract visitors to experience an authentic place. Conversely, a *tourist town* is developed for tourists’ entertainment without regard to the community’s character and heritage. These downtowns may attract tourists to shop but are not considered an integral part of the community by residents.

A *sustainable tourism destination*, in addition to being an appealing place for both residents and visitors, welcomes and orients visitors and shares the stories of the community and surrounding region in the setting of a preserved and revitalized downtown. This should be the goal for Guilford.



Guilford’s downtown offers retail businesses, like Page Hardware and Appliance Co., which provide a service for residents and also have charming appeal for visitors.

Key partners in this effort include the Town of Guilford, Guilford Green Merchants, Guilford Chamber of Commerce and Guilford Preservation Alliance. Meetings during the assessment visit yielded these observations:

- **Guilford Green Merchants Association** – This group was formed several years ago to promote businesses on the Green. With promotion-savvy leadership from shop owners Kathryn Greene and Vera Guibbory, the association has promoted the Green through advertising in state-produced tourism publications, creation of a website, production of a rack card and other activities.
- **Town of Guilford** – The Town of Guilford has recently hired Brian McGlone as Economic Development Coordinator. At present, the Economic Development Office is assessing and prioritizing its work plan, recognizing the role of tourism growth in making businesses healthier and increasing tax revenues.
- **Guilford Chamber of Commerce** – Janet Testa has recently taken the position of executive director of the chamber and is leading an assessment of priority focus areas for the organization with the health care industry identified as the number one generator of economic impact in Guilford. A tourism committee has been formed under the auspices of the chamber which includes representatives from the Green Merchants Association as well as Shoreline Arts Alliance, historic house museums and others. There is no representation from restaurants.
- **Guilford Preservation Alliance** – As part of the heritage tourism program’s development, GPA took the lead in developing walking tours of the historic downtown. Two tours – one focused on history and one on architecture – are given by high school students. GPA board member and middle school history teacher Dennis Culliton led the project to develop the tour script, recruit and train students as tour guides. A new website, www.historicguilford.org promotes the tours.

Challenges identified in making the Town Green a focus of tourism development are:

- The Town of Guilford, particularly the Economic Development Office, must respond to requests for funding and support from many parts of town – including other retail districts. The office is currently developing a structured system to respond to these requests.
- The Chamber of Commerce’s first focus will be on membership retention and recruitment. Out of almost 1,500 businesses, only a little over 300 belong to the chamber. This will mean offering many different programs and resources for different kinds of businesses – not just tourism.
- The Guilford Green Merchants Association has been challenged to recruit consistent involvement from retail businesses. The difficulty of a recent effort to recruit 10 businesses to contribute \$300 each toward a cooperative advertisement through the Connecticut Office of Tourism is one example of this challenge.

Even with these challenges, partners agreed the Town Green is a tremendous asset to Guilford and to the town’s tourism plans. The following recommendations are made to help support the effort to make the Town Green a primary destination in Guilford:

Place signage to showcase the Town Green

Residents of Guilford are likely to already know how to get downtown and, once there, they know what shops, restaurants and businesses are there. For tourists, getting downtown and discovering all it has to offer should be part of the adventure of travel. Signage is needed to make sure visiting is truly an adventure – not a frustration – and that visitors don’t miss out on the total experience the Town Green offers.

Signage should include:

- **Gateway** - Ed McMahon (founder of Scenic America and currently Senior Resident Fellow for Sustainable Development at the Urban Land Institute), notes:

“One road that deserves special consideration is a community’s gateway or main entry artery. Gateways are communities’ welcome mats – their front doors. Most people remember the first time they saw a place. That image becomes indelibly imprinted on the mind. Just as with meeting people, a good first impression is important, a bad first impression is hard to change. Through zoning overlays, scenic easements, sign controls and design standards, we must do more to protect the gateways to our communities, to our downtowns and to our historic sites and districts.”

Gateways leading to the Town Green are Highway 146 and Highway 77. Both are state designated Scenic Byways. A small, worn sign is posted coming into town on Highway 77. New signs should be placed at the gateways to town to let visitors know there is a “Historic Town Green _____ miles ahead.”



Good signage is an essential element of a gateway that welcomes visitors to a community.

- **Town Green** – Once in the downtown, signage is limited to directional signs to the Griswold and Hyland house museums, pedestrian crossings and parking. Signage is needed on each side of the Town Green to tell visitors what shops, restaurants and historic sites are nearby. Additionally, signage is needed to give direction to public parking and public restrooms. The Department of Parks and Recreation is working on signage plans for recreational areas. A plan should be developed to create a design that coordinates all signage.



Signage is needed in downtown Guilford to help visitors and residents find shops, restaurants and historic sites. Pictured left is signage in Panama City, Florida. Pictured right is signage in Natchitoches, Louisiana.



Hold Tourism Workshops for Downtown Merchants

Partners agreed there is a need to help downtown business owners understand and respond to the needs of tourists, as well as increasing understanding of the benefits increased tourism can have on their businesses. Tourism partners should host a workshop for downtown merchants (retail and restaurants) focused on tourism. Topics should cover discussion of the needs and expectations of tourists, providing good customer service and marketing to attract tourists. The workshop should be offered at least once a year to provide updated information. The National Trust for Historic Preservation offers a workshop titled “The Business of Tourism.” A sample agenda is included in the appendix of this report.

Develop Strategies to Recruit New Businesses

Antiques shops, a men’s clothing store and a sporting goods store were a few types of retail identified as needed in the downtown. Having an economically successful downtown – and the addition of a tourism growth plan – makes the Town Green appealing to potential business owners. The next step is finding people who are interested in opening new businesses and sharing with them all that Guilford can offer to help with their success.

A downtown business recruitment plan should be developed. There are many resources to help in this effort including case studies from towns across the country which have been successful in building their downtown business mix. Two resources are the Connecticut Main Street Center (<http://ctmainstreet.org/>), a nonprofit corporation that assists towns across the state in revitalization and economic development, and the National Trust Main Street Center, (www.preservationnation.org/main-street), a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation which offers training, technical assistance, resource materials and other assistance to downtowns across the country.



The Connecticut Main Street Program offers many workshops such as this one on Economic Development for Downtown Professionals which included a session on retail recruitment.

IV. Plan and develop new products to enhance the visitor experience

The World Tourism Organization has a broad definition of what constitutes a tourism product: lodging, food, transportation (road, water and air), rental services, travel agencies, cultural, sports and recreation services and country-specific goods and services.

For the purposes of heritage tourism development, a heritage tourism product is defined as *a heritage-themed experience that can be sold to visitors or provided to visitors to keep them in the community longer*. Developing a new heritage tourism product could range from creating one new tour to packaging existing heritage attractions to provide a multi-day, value-added package that combines experiences at attractions with unique dining and lodging. For example, a heritage tourism product could be:

- A guided tour
- An exhibit
- An interpretive sign
- An audio tour
- A podcast
- A self-guided tour brochure
- A living history experience
- A guidebook
- An interactive exhibit using technology
- A film or video
- A musical performance
- A theatrical play
- Hands-on activities
- An educational workshop
- A special event or festival
- Tasting traditional foods or recipes
- Demonstrations of traditional arts and crafts or folkways



Tours, hands on activities and interpretive signage are products that can enhance the visitor experience. Pictured clockwise from the top—Conner Prairie, Indiana; Stratford Hall, Virginia; Springfield, Illinois and Shenandoah Valley, Virginia.

There are many ways to enhance visitors' experiences – whether they are arriving for a general vacation or coming for a special once-a-year-event. The goal is to make Guilford – its culture, history, natural resources and heritage – come alive for visitors. The new historic walking tours are a great example of a new initiative to showcase the community's history and historic structures and encourage visitors to explore and enjoy Guilford.

Following are recommendations for new products to consider including in the town's heritage tourism plan. As the plan is developed and plans are adopted, also consider the order of priority for development - some are clearly activities that can be developed in the short-term (1-2 years), some are best suited to long-term development (3-5 years) and some may start on a small scale and grow into larger events or activities over time.

Interpretive Signage

Many communities use interpretive signage to tell specific stories about their history. The benefit of interpretive signage is its availability to visitors at any time (unlike scheduled tours or sites that have limited hours). Interpretive signage can also provide historical information that might not be available to visitors in other formats; for example, a sign could be placed in front of a church with pictures of the building in earlier days, excerpts from sermons and a timeline of important events. In recent years, many interpretive signs have also been designed to include QR codes (quick response). By scanning the QR code with a smart phone, a visitor has access to additional information about the site or story introduced on the sign. Interpretive signs serve a variety of functions for communities, such as:

- Interpretive signs illuminate the power of place. Clear educational messages and content inform the public of each site's historic significance.
- Interpretive panels do more than provide just dates and facts. They also inspire a feeling of stewardship in site visitors, strengthening awareness of cultural and natural resources.
- Thoughtful and well designed signage programs demonstrate community pride in local heritage.
- Interpretive signage is self-sufficient: it provides a high-quality interpretive experience without the requirements of staff or facilities to maintain.
- Interpretive signage enhances visitor perceptions of a site, city, or region. By drawing attention to an area's unique history and identity, tourists better appreciate the story of a new place.

(Source: Amanda Adams, LOKI Interpretive Group, www.lokiinterpretivegroup.com)



Interpretive signs help tell a community's story.
Top photo: Boulder, Colorado
Bottom photo: Natchitoches, Louisiana

Guilford’s tourism partners should consider key locations for placement of interpretive signage and develop a plan to include documenting historical information, locating images and selecting a design and fabrication company to produce the signs. Potential locations could include:

- Town Green – general historical information
- Historic churches on the Town Green
- Historic neighborhoods
- Shoreline
- Hiking trails

There are many interpretive signage designers and fabrication companies. An RFP should be developed to select the desired designer and company. Following are several who could be included on an RFP distribution list:

Jeff Dawson
 Lees-Dawson Associates
 20 Town Way
 Scituate, MA 02066
 781-544-2080
jdawson@leesdawson.com
www.dawson-associates.com
 (Cane River National Heritage Area)

Riggs Ward
 2315 W. Main Street
 Richmond, Virginia 23220
 804-254-1740
info@riggsward.com
www.riggsward.com
 (Shenandoah Battlefields)

Allan Hammons
 Hammons and Associates
 213 Fulton St.
 Greenwood, MS 38930
 662-453-7078
 (Mississippi Blues Trail)



The Mississippi Blues Trail features historic markers with text and images.

Audio/Video Tours

Audio and video technologies developed in recent years offer new ways to share the stories of historic sites, communities or regions with visitors. Many tourism destinations now offer audio and/or video tours to download on smart phones or access through cell phones. The technology can make sites come alive through voices, music and images. Additionally, the technology can also include maps and destination information to help visitors plan a trip.

Although in the years when cassettes or CDs were produced, many communities sold these tours, today visitors usually expect the tours to be available at no charge by downloading from a web site or connecting through a cell phone.

Guilford's tourism partners should consider developing a selection of tours including tours of the downtown, historic neighborhoods and recreational/nature areas where tours could focus on a range of interests from the area's history to bird watching to landscape features.

Companies who could be included on a RFP distribution list include:

Smart Trails – Fermata, Inc.

www.fermatainc.com/?page_id=1126

Tour Sphere

www.toursphere.com

GeoQuest Technologies

www.geoquesttech.com

Guide By Cell

www.guidebycell.com

Heritage Trails

During the assessment visit, interest was expressed in finding ways to partner with nearby communities in tourism development and promotion – including the possibility of developing heritage trails to link communities together through unifying storylines.

Heritage trails and tours are intended to enhance a visitor's experience by linking sites to create a cohesive storyline and to make it easy to plan a trip. In many ways, the heritage trail *becomes* the destination, not just the route from point to point. A general definition of a heritage trail is *a network of cultural, heritage and natural resources that collectively create an identity and share a region's stories with visitors*. Even though a definition can be offered, the actual development of heritage trails, and what they offer to enhance the visitor experience, varies widely. It is helpful to consider three types or levels of heritage trails:

- **Basic Heritage Trails** – A basic trail involves creating a list of sites and posting these on a website, app or in a printed piece along with a map. A next step would be to develop suggested itineraries. A basic trail promotes sites currently available to visitors but does not address the visitor experience at the sites or along the route.
- **Interpreted Heritage Trails** – An interpreted trail offers materials – either electronically or printed materials – to guide a visitor's tour and to provide additional historical and cultural information to create an enhanced visitor experience. Interpretive materials can include guidebooks, interpretive signage, downloadable or cell phone audio and/or video tours.
- **Full Service Heritage Trails** – In addition to the materials developed for interpreted heritage trails, a full service trail includes features such as wayfinding signage and visitor centers. Heritage trail developers may also become involved in developing special events or guided tours and in advocating for improved visitor services along the route.

Partnering with nearby communities to link thematic visitor experiences is a good idea as it gives visitors a reason to stay longer or to plan a return visit. Developing regional heritage trails is a project that Guilford could explore as part of the long-term strategies for heritage tourism development. Themes might include topics such as agritourism, nature/outdoors, local history or local arts and crafts.

Case Study: HandMade in America – Western North Carolina

Since its inception more than 20 years ago, HandMade in America, based in Western North Carolina, has become a national model for cultural and heritage trail development. HandMade in America was created to showcase artists and craftspeople in a 23-county region and to generate economic impact for this economically depressed area. HandMade developed a system to guide visitors directly to the artists' studios, but to do so they needed criteria to determine which artists would be included on the trail. Criteria included: Is the site well marked, safe and easily accessible? Do the proprietors maintain regular hours? In the case of HandMade in America, shops and galleries must feature American-made crafts with an emphasis on those from Western North Carolina. Restaurants must feature indigenous foods as part of their standard menu. After sites were selected, the next step was training. Participants were trained in how to welcome and accommodate visitors and how to think as entrepreneurs to create new partnerships and promotions. (www.handmadeinamerica.org)

Showcase the Outdoors for Hiking, Biking and Water Recreation and Other Outdoor Activities

The protection of land and natural resources by the Guilford Land Conservation Trust (GLCT), the City of Guilford and the New England National Scenic Trail for the enjoyment of residents and visitors is a remarkable accomplishment. Through dedicated efforts, the Guilford Land Conservation Trust now owns 10 percent of the land within the town’s boundaries, and the City of Guilford owns another 10 percent. Although the New England National Scenic Trail is managed in Connecticut by the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association, the trail’s website (www.newenglandnst.org) notes the entire trail system is predominantly managed and maintained by volunteers. This is the case in Guilford where a dedicated group of volunteers has been involved in plans for the completion of the southern point of the 220-mile trail in Guilford.

A primary focus of the GLCT is the Westwoods trail system, the largest recreational hiking area in Guilford. Thirty-nine miles of trails (20 miles mapped) wind through 1,200 acres. On April 1, the GLCT hosted the sixth annual Bimblers’ Bash Trail Race, a 10K race through Westwoods. The race is a great example of attracting visitors to Guilford as it usually draws about 250 people with 75% of participants from out of town. In addition, guided walks are offered throughout the year.

The Guilford Department of Parks and Recreation is working on improvements at the shoreline including adding 170 racks for kayaks. Consideration is also being given to developing a kayak “blueways” trail. In addition, a boardwalk and information kiosk will be installed as part of the New England Scenic Trail.



The Guilford Land Conservation Trust has saved many acres of land and developed popular hiking trails.

Research on the growth of these activities nationwide shows these efforts can contribute greatly to tourism plans for Guilford:

- In the New England states, the participation level in outdoor activities by those age 6 and older is 51%. (Source: 2009 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, www.outdoorindustry.org).
- The 2008 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment found high percentages of people who enjoy activities that Guilford can offer:
 - ⇒ Viewing or photographing natural scenery - 60.5%
 - ⇒ Viewing or photographing other wildlife - 46.9%
 - ⇒ Viewing or photographing birds - 37.6%
 - ⇒ Kayaking - 29.4%
 - ⇒ Sightseeing- 14.0%
 - ⇒ Visiting wilderness - 12.8%

(Source: National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE): The Interagency National Survey Consortium, Coordinated by the USDA Forest Service, Recreation, Wilderness, and Demographics Trends Research Group, Athens, GA and the Human Dimensions Research Laboratory, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN)

- In 2008, the popularity of hiking grew by seven percent over the previous year. (Source: 2009 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, www.outdoorindustry.org).
- In 2010, 43.3 million Americans six years and older participated in bicycling, making bicycling (road biking, mountain biking and bicycle motorcross) the fourth most popular outdoor activity in America (Source, Outdoor Industry Association, 2010, www.outdoorindustry.org). As a result, the bicycling industry generates billions in revenue and taxes, creates jobs and leads to expenditures in other recreational and service related industries.
- Kayaking is one of the fastest growing outdoor sports. According to a 2009 Special Report on Paddle Sports by the Outdoor Foundation, 9.9 million Americans participated in canoeing in 2008; 7.8 million Americans participated in kayaking, and 4.7 million in rafting. (www.outdoorfoundation.org/research.paddlesports.html)
- Water trails, or blueways, offer opportunities to enjoy scenic and historical sites along a riverway by kayak, canoe or other water use. Water trails typically include points of interest, access locations, day-use sites and camping areas and are accompanied by a map or guide brochure. The Chesapeake Bay Gateway Network provides a *Water Trail Toolkit* to assist in the planning, development and management of water trails. (www.baygateways.net/watertrailtools.cfm)



Kayaking and rafting are growing in popularity. Pictured is the John Flanagan Dam and Reservoir in Haysi, Virginia.
Photo by Marty Davis

With all of the opportunities presented by promotion of natural resources and outdoor activities, following are recommendations to capitalize on those opportunities:

- **Develop infrastructure** – As noted during assessment visit meetings, there is a need for coordinated signage and information kiosks at key locations along trails and waterways. The city’s Parks and Recreation Department is working on these plans, and this report supports that effort.
- **Recruit recreation-related businesses** – As interest in Guilford as an outdoor recreation destination grows, there are opportunities to recruit businesses to serve residents and visitors including:
 - **Bike shops and rental outfitters** provide the goods and services associated with bicycling, act as information resources about bicycling for visitors and new riders and can often attract and cultivate biking enthusiasts in communities.
 - **Outfitter shops** can provide supplies and services for many kinds of outdoor activities including water sports, hiking and photography. In addition to supplies such as clothing, sports equipment and souvenirs, a shop can also provide maps and information on upcoming events.
 - **Hostels** can take many shapes and forms, from the formal to the informal, all providing the necessary amenities for traveling cyclists. June “The Cookie Lady” Curry Bike Hostel in Afton, Virginia is a well-known stop along the TransAmerica bike route where Curry has hosted over 10,000 cyclists at her home since 1976. She provides a well-stocked kitchen with food, cold water shower and lots of floor space with great hospitality. (www.coldsplinters.com/2011/01/the-cookie-lady/) (Source: *The Conservation Fund, 2012 report for Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area*)



Having bikes available for rent encourages visitors to explore. Pictured is the bike rental station at Wilderness Road State Park, Lee County, Virginia.

Capitalize on the interest in photography

With the growing interest in photography, the scenic beauty of Guilford provides an ideal setting to attract photographers. In addition to photographing the area's scenery, Guilford's many interesting architectural structures would also appeal to photographers. Ways to build on this interest include:

- **Promote photo opportunities through photography clubs** – There are many photography clubs in Connecticut with websites to share ideas on great locations with their members. Additionally, many clubs coordinate field trips for their members. A list of photography clubs in Connecticut is found at <http://capinct.org/Links.aspx>.
- **Set up a Flickr™ site** – Flickr™ is an image and video hosting website managed by Yahoo! and available to users at no charge. A new site could be set up for Guilford and photography clubs could be invited to post pictures.
- **Identify appealing locations and develop a photographers' guide** – Residents can be engaged to help identify locations in Guilford and in the surrounding area that would appeal to photographers. From these suggestions, a guide can be created to offer suggestions for photographers on great places to photograph buildings, natural scenery, festivals and people such as artisans at work or musicians performing.

American Trails

An excellent resource for learning more about developing all forms of recreational trails and building a network is American Trails. As stated on the organization's website (www.americantrails.org), "*American Trails is the only national, nonprofit organization working on behalf of all trail interests, including hiking, bicycling, mountain biking, horseback riding, water trails, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, trail motorcycling, ATVs, snowmobiling and four-wheeling.*

American Trails' members want to create and protect America's network of interconnected trails. We support local, regional, and long-distance trails and greenways, whether they be in backcountry, rural or urban areas. Our goal is to support America's trails by finding common ground and promoting cooperation among all trail interests.



Pictured is a hiking trail in McCreary County, Kentucky.

Case Study

Northern Forest Canoe River Trail Combines Work with Vacation for Travelers

When the nonprofit Northern Forest Canoe River Trail (NFCT) was created in 2000, organizers set as the mission connecting people to the natural environment, human heritage and contemporary communities along the 740-mile inland paddling trail tracing historic travel routes across New York, Vermont, Quebec, New Hampshire and Maine.



Checking the route map on the Saranac River, New York

Photo: Northern Forest Canoe Trail

To meet the mission of stewardship, and to offer an opportunity to visitors who want to combine a little work with their vacation, NFCT created *Waterway Work Trips*. NFCT selects sites in need of work and designs three-day trips to include trail maintenance along with paddling. Participants pay a small fee to cover the costs of food and bring their own camping and paddling gear. Interns prep the site and are on hand to supervise participants' work. For information, visit www.northernforestcanoetrail.org.

Case Study

Freedom's Run

The idea for Freedom's Run, an event held in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, was sparked in a visit between community activist Lois Turco and family practice physician Dr. Mark Cucuzzella. Encountering Cucuzzella while Christmas shopping, Turco shared an update on her work to obtain National Heritage Area designation and Cucuzzella talked about his Healthy Kids/Healthy Communities project and "Children In Nature" national initiative. "We looked at each other and said 'Why don't we put on a marathon here?'" Turco says. They obtained permission from the National Park Service to plan the route through four national parks – Harper's Ferry, C&O Canal, Antietam National Battlefield and the Potomac Heritage Trail – and from towns along the route.



Freedom's Run takes runners through four National Parks.

Photo: Freedom's Run

In planning the race, Turco ensured the message of the region's history was communicated by creating a section on the website (www.freedomsrun.org) with information on the historical sites marathoners would be running or walking past and integrated the historical information with a map of the marathon route.

The first marathon was held in October 2009 and drew over 1,500 participants from across the country. Proceeds have been used to build walking trails around local schools and to create a website focusing on the proposed National Heritage Area. The race even resulted in a two new businesses in downtown Shepherdstown.

Showcase local artists and products

The Guilford Green Merchants, Guilford Arts Center and Shoreline Arts Alliance showcase Guilford's thriving arts community and cultivate interest in the arts in a number of ways including:

- The Town Green includes galleries and shops that sell locally made arts such as BSK Designs which offers unique glass jewelry and dinnerware and Greene Art Gallery which shows and sells original artwork by regional artists.
- Guilford Art Center's annual Craft Expo brings 10,000 visitors to the Town Green over four days to see and purchase handmade crafts.
- The Shoreline Arts Trail's annual Open Studios Weekend invites visitors and residents to visit artist's studios and to see demonstrations of painting, jewelry making, sculpting, stained glass and other art forms. In the 2011 event, 17 of the 43 artists showcased were in Guilford and included artists in the realms of painting, jewelry making, photography, fiber arts, sculpting, pottery and goldsmithing.
- Guilford Art Center offers a wide range of classes including basketry, beading, blacksmithing, ceramics, fiber, glass, painting, photography, sculpture and weaving. The center offers a popular youth program which draws students from Guilford and the surrounding region. A gallery exhibits by regional and national artists, and a store sells a variety of artistic pieces such as jewelry, ceramic, glass and wood pieces.



The Guilford Art Center's retail shop (above) and the Greene Art Gallery (below) on the Town Green are two of many places where visitors can find artistic creations to purchase.



As noted in the research findings on cultural heritage travelers, 54% say they enjoy visiting art museums or galleries when they travel and 51% say they make it a point to shop for local arts and crafts. Building on the many events and venues already showcasing Guilford's artistic talents, there is an opportunity to further raise the visibility of the arts to visitors including the following strategies:

Create a public art program

In recent years, communities across the country have embraced the concept of public art as a way to communicate a community’s unique qualities, to showcase local artists and to bring the arts to all residents and visitors. The concept of public art has been around for many years, most notably in the sculptures and statues that previous generations placed in public areas as memorials (such as those found in Guilford’s Town Green).

In more recent years, public art has come to reflect a touch of whimsy – unique pieces of art that say something about the community. A public art program usually requires the approval – and often the involvement – of city government since art pieces are often placed on public property. Public art projects are often funded through a “Percent for Art” ordinance that requires a percentage (usually 1%) of the cost of new construction of public buildings or other buildings be set aside to support these projects.

The Town of Guilford could consider partnering with the Guilford Art Center and Shoreline Arts Alliance to explore the opportunity for a public art program in Guilford. If there is interest in a public art program, planners should start on a small scale to gauge community support and response to a pilot art project. For example, a project like the one described in the case study – designing bicycle racks for downtown – could showcase local artistic talents and also tie into plans to expand opportunities for bicycling as part of an outdoor recreation plan for residents and tourists.

A resource which can help with this effort is the Public Art Network, a program of Americans for the Arts. (www.artsusa.org/networks/public_art_network/default.asp)

Case Study

Nashville Uses Public Art to Aid Bicyclists

In 2010, the Metro Nashville Arts Commission, working with the Mayor’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, solicited design proposals from local artists to design bicycle racks for downtown Nashville. The project was part of the city’s public art program which is funded through a “1% for Art” – a fee on large-scale construction projects in the city. Seven bicycle racks were designed, constructed and placed in downtown locations. Designs include those reflective the location where they were placed, such as a giant microphone placed near Music Row and a design of corn and tomatoes placed at Farmer’s Market.

<http://www.artsnashville.org/PublicArt.aspx?MID=3>

A bicycle rack in the shape of a banjo reflects Nashville’s musical heritage.

Photo: Metro Arts Commission



Feature art displays in high traffic areas

There are so many artists' creations to discover in Guilford – the Guilford Art Center store, in shops on the Town Green and in the artist's studios. To make it easier to find these artists, design rotating art displays in high traffic parts of town. This could include setting up displays in the visitor center (discussed elsewhere in this report), in vacant store windows, restaurant lobbies and other locations. Labels should be posted to tell about the artist and where their works can be purchased.

Consider branding local products

Tags on locally produced art stating "Made in Guilford" can help create an awareness of the wide variety of artistic creations being made in Guilford. The Pennsylvania Wilds Artisan Trail Initiative has successfully branded their products, using specific standards to indicate the artwork is locally made. Artisans have



discovered using the brand increases sales and the sale price of their products. In addition to branding, the initiative included development of an artisan trail and an online store to market locally made products to a wider audience. www.pawildsartisans.com

Plan and Host a "Guilford Chautauqua"

Discussions during the assessment visit about developing new activities to attract visitors and to appeal to residents included the idea of developing a high-quality music and arts festival to be held on the Town Green. Partners to plan and host the event would include Shoreline Arts Alliance, the New Haven Symphony Orchestra and other arts organization. The festival would be planned as a small-scale event, focusing on quality, and would grow gradually over the years.

Building on this idea, it is recommended that heritage tourism partners consider expanding this concept to plan a "Guilford Chautauqua" which could become a signature event for Guilford.

Chautauquas were an extremely popular adult education movement from the late 19th through the early 20th centuries. The first Chautauqua was held in New York in 1874 at Chautauqua Lake by Methodist minister John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller, a businessman. The idea caught on, and within the next decade, similar events – adopting the name "Chautauqua" sprang up across the country. Chautauquas took two forms – events held at permanent institutions and "circuit Chautauquas" which were presented in a town for a few days under tents with a traveling troupe of performers. Chautauquas combined lectures from prominent speakers such as politicians or preachers, music of all kinds ranging from spirituals to opera to band music and other entertainment.

At their peak in the 1920s, circuit Chautauquas brought a unique combination of culture, education and entertainment to over 10,000 communities. By the 1940s, with the advent of radio and movies, the popularity of Chautauquas declined.

Even with this decline, some permanent institutions continued to operate. The Chautauqua Institution in New York continues to operate today as a nonprofit institution and is a National Historic Landmark (www.ciweb.org). Another Chautauqua institution is the Colorado Chautauqua, begun in Boulder, Colorado in 1898, and also a National Historic Landmark (www.chautauqua.com).



Jared Jacobsen, coordinator of worship and sacred music, leads the Chautauqua Choir at the Chautauqua Institution in New York.

Photo: Chautauqua Institution

In the 1970s, interest in Chautauquas was revived in North Dakota as a humanities program. The concept caught on once again and was championed by the National Endowment for the Humanities and many state humanities councils as well as other organizations. An Internet search found Chautauquas currently held in Kentucky, Ohio, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Nevada, New Mexico and Kansas. Today's Chautauquas carry on the spirit of the original events with inspirational speakers, musical entertainment and other educational activities. Many have first-person performances of important historical characters such as Frederick Douglass, Henry Ford, Clara Barton and Mark Twain.

No Chautauquas were found currently in Connecticut, creating an opportunity to develop a signature event for Guilford. To make the most of out of positioning the Chautauqua as a signature event, program plans should encompass the entire state of Connecticut with Guilford as a central focus. Elements of a Guilford Chautauqua on the Town Green could include:

- **Music** – As with the original Chautauquas, the Guilford event could offer a variety of musical performances including choirs from the historic churches surrounding the Town Green, the New Haven Symphony and talented local, state and regional musicians.
- **Historical personalities** – Connecticut has many famous personalities from every era of the nation's history including 18th Century – Ethan Allen; 19th Century – Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, P.T. Barnum and Noah Webster; 20th Century – Dean Acheson and Ella Grasso. These personalities can be brought to life through first-person interpretation and by presentations from historians or authors who have written about them.

- **Exploring current events** – Speakers from Connecticut could give lectures on topics of current interest – elections, scientific discovery, sustainable living, etc.
- **Exploring Connecticut’s history** – Speakers with expertise on Connecticut’s history could give lectures on historical topics ranging from the original 13 colonies to the Civil War to 20th century events.
- **Walking tours** – The new guided walking tours could be offered at specific times throughout the event as well as guided hikes of Westwoods trails or other outdoor trails.
- **Historic home tours** – Guilford’s five historic house museums could participate in the Chautauqua by offering specially-themed tours, lectures and other activities during the event.

Developing a Chautauqua will require a dedicated committee to explore the options and plan for a small, first-year event that could grow over time. To provide a foundation of support for this effort, consider applying for a National Endowment for the Humanities grant in the America Cultural and Historic Organizations Planning Grant category. (www.neh.gov).

V. Develop visitor services and amenities

Although travelers may enjoy visiting a historic downtown – taking a walking tour, attending a festival or touring a local museum – the greatest economic impact of tourism is generated when visitors spend money on lodging, dining and making purchases. Additionally, visitors must feel comfortable at their destination. An important part of this comfort level is making it easy for visitors to find what they need. By developing new visitor services, Guilford can offer a small-town, walkable destination that appeals to visitors. This section discusses considerations for new lodging and visitor amenities to enhance Guilford’s appeal to tourists.

Increase lodging

Although time during the assessment visit did not permit touring lodging facilities in Guilford, it was reported there are fewer than 100 rooms in the town’s boundaries. Zoning does allow for bed and breakfast inns, although in recent years there was objection to a proposed bed and breakfast. An Internet search found two B&Bs – The B&B at Bartlett Farm (three rooms) and Sound Reach Bed and Breakfast (two rooms.) There is also a Comfort Inn off of Interstate 95.



The B&B at Bartlett Farm is one of two bed and breakfasts in Guilford.
Photo: B&B Finder.com

As Guilford grows as a heritage tourism destination, there will undoubtedly be more demand for lodging. An organization which provides guidance in cultivating and supporting innkeepers is the Professional Innkeepers Association (PIA). PIA offers a multitude of resources to help innkeepers and aspiring innkeepers including an online forum, educational materials and an annual New England Innkeeping Conference and Trade Show which includes a workshop for aspiring innkeepers. (The 2012 conference was April 30-May 2 in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.) <https://innkeeping.site-ym.com/>).

According to PAI’s 2009-2010 *Industry Study of Innkeeping Operations and Finance*, occupancy rates, room prices and revenues continue to increase for B&Bs nationally, due to the popularity of these unique accommodations. Median occupancy grew from 35% in 2005 to 43% in 2009. Facts about B&Bs:

- The median “average daily rate” for B&Bs nationally is \$150.
- The typical B&B has an average of six rooms.
- 36% have achieved “historical” designation by a local, state or national historic preservation agency or organization.
- B&Bs are known for offering many amenities which add value for the guest. The study showed that 93% offer free high speed Internet access and a majority provide luxury bedding and linens, toiletries and televisions. Private bathrooms are offered by 94% of B&B.

A study conducted by Michigan State University documented the characteristics of travelers who enjoy staying in B&Bs. The study found that B&Bs appealed to well educated, high income travelers with an average age of 40. Couples comprised 82% of guests. Respondents to the survey said the uniqueness of B&Bs was the attraction to this type of lodging. They used words like “charm,” “ambience,” “quaintness” and “atmosphere” to describe the places where they stayed. The idea of a B&B as a get-away was also very appealing. B&B guests are also more likely than other travelers to post reviews about their lodging on Internet consumer sites.

Clearly, the demographics of travelers who enjoy staying in B&Bs matches that of tourists who are characterized as cultural heritage travelers. As Guilford’s heritage tourism plans progress, proactively recruiting new B&B innkeepers is a logical development step.

Even with an increase in the number of B&Bs, there is also likely to be a growing need for more traditional hotel accommodations. As new lodging is developed within the town’s boundaries, it will be important to ask business owners to fit with existing development pattern and traditional character of Guilford. The publication, *Better Models for Commercial Development* (www.conservationfund.org/publication/better_models_commercial_development - free to download) provides examples a hotel chains designed to fit within the community’s overall development and design plans.



At left is the typical design of a Hampton Inn. Pictured center is a Hampton Inn in Truckee, California and on the right is a Hampton Inn in Leesburg, Virginia. Both are designed to complement their community’s character.

Photos by Ed McMahon (left) and Kendra Briechele (center and right)

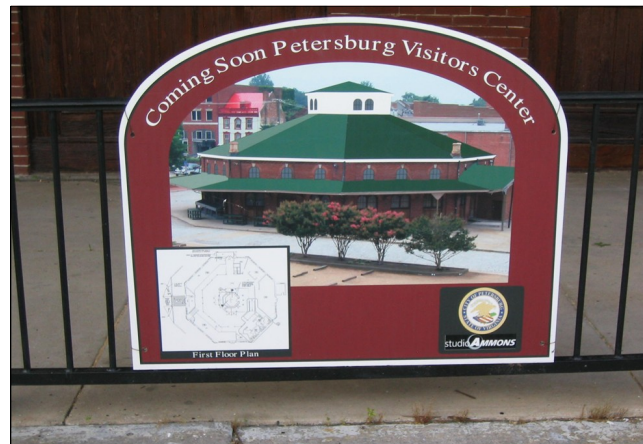
Plan for Visitor Information Centers

The Whitfield State Museum provides the only information center for visitors in Guilford. At the time of this assessment, the site faced an unknown future as a historic site and as a visitor center. The site is only open Wednesday through Sunday from early May through mid-December.

Even if the site continues to be open, Guilford's tourism partners should consider additional locations to provide information to visitors. The presence of a visitor center tells tourists that a community welcomes their visit.

As stated in *Tourism USA: Guidelines for Tourism Development*: "Tourist Information Centers are the most important visitor service facility in a community. They frequently provide the initial contact with tourists...and they have the opportunity and responsibility of creating the first impressions a tourist will perceive." (University of Missouri – Columbia, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism).

Despite the advent of technology such as smart phones to make information available to visitors before and during their trips, there is still a need to make information available in other ways. Anyone who has traveled to an unfamiliar city and been unsure about how to proceed with planning a day's activities knows the appeal of talking to a knowledgeable person or picking up a brochure or map of the town.



A visitor center is an important part of making visitors feel welcome in a community.

A well-designed visitor center can offer brochures and maps – and much more to enhance the visitor experience such as:

Information – Brochures, maps, guidebooks, and electronic kiosks with videos and printable maps. Staff (paid or volunteer) can provide planning assistance, sell tickets or make reservations.

- **Gift Shop** – Sales of souvenirs, box lunches, snacks.
- **Rentals** – Bicycle rentals.
- **Visitor Surveys** – Collect data on visitor demographics.
- **Seating/Reading Corner** – An inviting space for visitors to relax, enjoy a snack and read about things to see and do in the area.
- **Public restrooms** – ADA accessible

Guilford has two ideal locations for visitor information centers – the Town Green and the train station.

- **The Town Green** – As previously discussed, the Town Green should be positioned as a primary destination for visitors to Guilford. Shopping, dining, history and cultural activities can all be found here. The Guilford Preservation Alliance is currently making plans to place an interactive information kiosk in the downtown. The kiosk is an excellent method for providing information to visitors because it will be available at any time to provide information on things to see and do in Guilford.

A longer-term project would be to open a visitor information center in the downtown. If this recommendation is pursued, next steps would be choosing appropriate location and including plans in the overall heritage tourism plan for Guilford.

Downtown Guilford is in the corridor of two state-designated scenic byways (Highway 77 and Highway 146). The National Scenic Byways Program's grant program includes a category for byway facilities which provides funding for a range of facilities including rest/visitor information centers and interpretive centers. www.bywayonline.org/grants/application/information/category_4 (The only National Scenic Byway grant received to date was a 2004 grant award for pedestrian improvements – crosswalks – for Highway s146 and 77 in Guilford's Town Center.)

Please note that the National Scenic Byway grant program is part of the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill. The House version proposed to repeal the National Scenic Byway Program including grant funding. The availability of grants will depend on whether the program – and its grant programs – continues beyond 2012.

- **The Train Station** – Guilford is very fortunate to have Shoreline East service. Serving primarily as a commuter railroad, it was noted during a meeting with Guilford's government officials that it is not used to the extent it could be to promote day trips for visitors. As Guilford's heritage tourism plans grow, promotions could be built targeting the audience in surrounding communities with a message that it is easy to travel to Guilford by train. For several years, the Guilford Preservation Alliance has advocated for preservation of two late 19th century buildings located at the train station site – the water tower and engine house buildings. GPA has conferred with AMTRAK, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and the Town of Guilford in an effort to preserve these buildings through a public-private partnership. Despite complicated negotiations that have stopped and started several times (including

contamination issues) there is still an opportunity to consider restoration of the water tower for use as a visitor information center (and to use the engine house building for offices and/or retail). In a summary of the Guilford Train Station, the website for the 2012 Brownfields Conference (www.brownfieldconference.org), states “the water tower is the only one on the Connecticut shoreline.” The report quotes an archaeological survey: “The Guilford water tower represents a rare survival of an early form: a tank enclosed within a solid-walled building.”



A resource to potentially provide funding for adapting the water tower into a visitor information center is the Transportation Enhancement Program (TEA-21). The program funnels federal highway funds through state transportation departments to support community-based projects to enhance the travel experience. Twelve activities are eligible for funding. Three of the funding categories connect to restoration of the water tower as a visitor information center – construction or restoration of welcome centers related to scenic or historic highway programs, restoration of historic buildings for transportation-related purposes, and rehabilitation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities. (A list of all 12 activities is found at www.enhancements.org/12_activities.asp).



The train station is an ideal location to place a visitor information center.

According to a 2010 report, the majority of TEA-21 funds in Connecticut were awarded to projects to develop bicycle and pedestrian facilities, to address safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists or to convert abandoned railway corridors to trails. However, rehabilitation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities ranked fourth, and funding (almost \$1.3 million) was awarded for development of welcome centers. A contact should be made to the Connecticut Department of Transportation to learn more about how the state distributes these funds and to explore the opportunity to apply for funding. <http://www.enhancements.org>

VI. Develop a marketing plan to attract visitors to Guilford.

The most outstanding destination will not generate economic impact unless visitors know about it and decide to plan a visit. A marketing plan is required to accomplish this goal. As part of Guilford's heritage tourism plan development, a marketing plan is needed to identify target audiences, define marketing messages and to develop strategies to reach potential visitors. For heritage tourism promotion, there is also the added element of messaging to communicate a sense of place and the authenticity of the destination.

Traditional tourism marketing has focused on promotional venues such as newspapers, magazine, radio and television. Although these outlets continue to be important, in the past decade marketing has experienced an overwhelming transformation as the Internet and social media have emerged to take a prominent role in travel planning. The transformation has also resulted in shorter planning times before a trip and the expectation of tourists that information will be available whenever they want to access it.

The result is the need for a two-part marketing plan:

- Before the trip- Reach potential tourists and entice them to come to your town or region.
- During the trip – Let tourists know about all the things there are to see and do and encourage them to explore once they are here.

As stated in the World Tourism Organization's 2011 report: "One person's shared experience becomes another person's inspiration for dreaming - and the cycle begins all over again. Are we part of the conversation? Are we engaging with travelers about their experiences?" (*Javier Gonzalez-Soria y Moreno de la Santa, Managing Director, Google Travel Spain*)

The Changing World of Tourism Marketing

Traditional tourism promotion:
Show
Tell
Persuade

New tourism promotion:
Facilitate
Orchestrate
Enable

Source: Tourism Currents

As discussed in the introductory section of this report, research shows a growing interest in many kinds of travel including travel focused on culture and heritage, ecotourism, outdoor recreation, volunteer vacations and staycations. This interest in travel is challenged by concerns about the cost of gasoline and other factors resulting from the ongoing economic recession.

As more communities become engaged in developing tourism programs, the tourism industry continues to become more competitive. Marketing can be a costly endeavor, making it essential to undertake careful planning to build key partnerships and use limited resources wisely. In order to create an effective marketing plan for Guilford, a two-step approach is recommended.

Coordinate with the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism to develop a comprehensive marketing plan

To get the most out of limited marketing dollars and to be able to build new partnerships and reach new audiences, there is no better partner for a community than a state travel office. The Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism offers a number of resources – including a grant program – that are important for Guilford.

The state tourism office has been through many changes in the past decade. Since 2003, the commission, housed in the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, has been funded through the general fund. In FY 2008-2009, the commission's overall budget was \$5.7 million – ranking Connecticut 49th out of 50 states (Rhode Island was 50th) in tourism budgets. (*Source: U.S. Travel Association*)

In FY 2009-2010, as part of sweeping cuts to the state's budget, the commission's budget for marketing was cut to \$1 where it remained for two fiscal years. (The \$1 amount was to keep the line item as a "place holder" in hopes of replenishing the budget in future years without having to recreate the budget line.) Some tourism office personnel positions remained, and the office was able to continue operating a website and to operate the state's welcome centers.

Fortunately, in the past year, Governor Dannel Malloy proposed putting \$15 million in the commission's budget which was approved by the Connecticut General Assembly. This infusion of funds has sparked an aggressive planning process to rebrand the state as a tourism destination and to create new partnership-based programs and promotions designed to significantly increase visitation to the state.

Part of this process involves reorganizing the responsibilities of the state's three tourism regions. In addition to continuing to promote their own region, each region will now also function as an administrative district and will be responsible for specific promotional activities representing the entire state. The Eastern Region will manage the state's hospitality training program; the Western Region will manage visitor centers and familiarization tours; the Central Region (which includes the Greater New Haven and River Valley area) will manage group tour promotions.

In addition, the tourism commission is forging a new partnership with the Greater Hartford Convention and Visitors Bureau which will change its name to the Connecticut Convention and Sports Bureau. The state tourism commission will contract with the agency to manage sales to the travel industry's convention and meetings market as well as sports events.

The new strategies come at an opportune time as Guilford's tourism partners begin development of a heritage tourism plan. It will be essential for Guilford to stay in engaged with the state tourism commission to understand these new operating formats and to make the most of these opportunities .

In the near future, specific opportunities that should be pursued by Guilford's tourism partners are:

- **Apply for a Tourism Product Development grant** – As stated by State Tourism Director Randy Fiveash, these grants are for “big ideas” such as bringing a group of partners together to develop a marketing or strategic plan. The minimum grant amount is \$30,000; maximum is \$100,000. Grants require a 50 percent match (20 percent can be an in-kind match). The lead applicant must be a nonprofit organization. The next deadline for applications is September 21, 2012. Guilford should apply for a grant to fund development of a marketing plan. www.cultureandtourism.org/cct/lib/cct/TPD_Guidelines_FY12.pdf (Please note: The tourism commission also offers marketing grants. Once the marketing plan is completed, Guilford's tourism partners can investigate application in this category to assist with marketing implementation.)
- **Participate in Connecticut branding** – Part of the tourism commission's branding efforts include asking Connecticut residents to share what they love about their state. A new website has been created – www.myCTstory.com. A promotional campaign invites the submission of stories and pictures. Visitors to the site can vote on their favorite stories with prizes awarded to the top vote getters. Thematic categories include topics such as “Best Day Ever,” “Interesting People,” and “Culturally Speaking.” Guilford stories should be added to the website to show support for the campaign and to help create more awareness about all that Guilford has to offer.

Develop short-term marketing strategies to implement by Guilford's tourism partners.

Developing and implementing a comprehensive marketing plan is a major commitment of time and resources and will eventually yield increased visitation and economic impact for Guilford. It is usually recommended that communities finish a heritage tourism plan and implement the product development strategies (new tours, attractions, etc.) before launching tourism promotions. However, Guilford already has so much to appeal to visitors that implementing short-term marketing strategies is recommended to increase awareness and visitation.

Americans are experiencing the "Great American Time Squeeze" – working many hours and having little time to plan a trip. When they do decide to travel, the easy availability of information is essential. Research shows that 45.7% rely on user-

generated website content (reviews of hotels, destinations, restaurants, etc.) and 29.2% use social media for travel planning. Destination websites are used by 28.2% of travelers, and 26.4% use mobile phones/smart phone to access travel information. The opinion of friends and family also remains an important information source for 37.9%. (Source: *Destination Analysts, "State of the American Traveler Survey," July 2011*).

- 41% of Americans experience "time poverty"
- 1 in 5 workers spends more than 50 hours a week at work
- 33% of Americans do not take all their vacation days
- Americans have many choices about how to spend their leisure time

Source: YPartnership 2008 Travel Monitor and Expedia survey

The following recommendations are intended to respond to these current travel trends. Although they require an investment of time, they do not require a significant investment of money. An additional benefit is that, while they are building awareness for Guilford as a destination in the short-term, these strategies can grow and change as the comprehensive marketing plan is developed and to respond to future changes in technology and its use for travel planning.

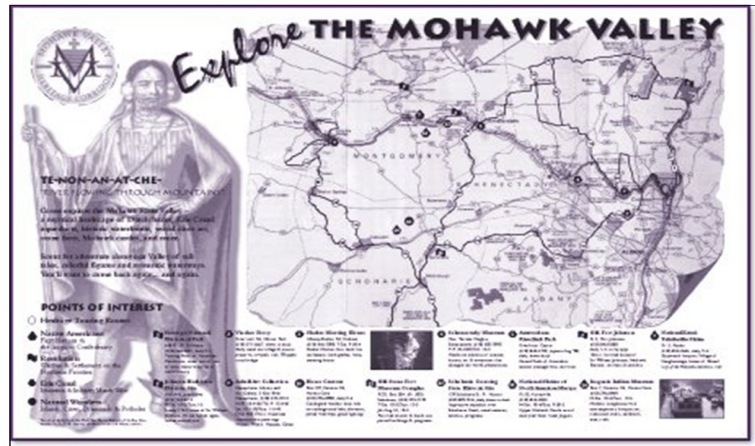
Create itineraries

In recent years, tourism bureaus have begun developing suggested itineraries to encourage visitors to explore and to respond to visitor interests. Guilford could offer a number of itineraries with themes such as “People and Places,” “Discover the Great Outdoors” or “Shop and Dine in Guilford.” Examples of itineraries are found at: www.padutchcountry.com/vacation-ideas/index.asp
www.visitcos.com/colorado-springs/travel/itineraries

Print tear-off maps

Currently there are many brochures and rack cards with information about Guilford and various attractions including those produced by the Guilford Green Merchants Association, Guilford Chamber of Commerce, Dudley Farm, Guilford Keeping Society, Hyland House, Shoreline Arts Trail and Guilford Mail-a-Map. A visitor would have to gather all of these printed pieces – or access websites – to be able to plan a visit to Guilford. A tear-off map will make it easier for visitors to learn about things to see and do.

Maps are a cost-effective, frontline piece that can be printed and distributed in quantity through the community. They can also be underwritten by sponsors to defray design and printing costs. Printing costs vary, but an average cost is around \$700-\$800 for 10,000 maps, printed in pads of 100 each.



Maps are an inexpensive way to help visitors learn about things to see and do.

Use social media to reach new audiences

State and local tourism agencies are increasingly using not only websites but social media including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Flickr, YouTube and QR Codes to reach visitors. Social media allows the development of an ongoing relationship with previous visitors and a dialogue with people who are considering where they want to travel. This extends the reach of marketing far beyond accessing information on a website.

Key benefits of using social media

- Social media allows learning directly from customers.
- Free customer reviews are more valuable than purchased advertisements (the coveted “word of mouth” recommendation).
- Customers can find exactly what they want.

(Source: www.commoncraft.com)

Although a social media plan will be part of a comprehensive marketing plan for Guilford, in the short-term, it is recommended that a “Visit Guilford” Facebook page be created. A search of Facebook found no active sites for Guilford. Creating a Facebook page is an important step in reaching out to potential travel audiences.

Since 2004, Facebook has become the dominant force in social media communication for friends and family and increasingly for businesses including tourism promotion. Of particular importance is the demographic of Facebook users – 28 million people over the age of 45 are active on Facebook. In 2011, research showed the following demographics for Facebook users (Source: *Social Media Today: Facebook Demographics Revised – 2011 Statistics*):

- Average user has 130 friends on Facebook
- Average users spends 15 hours and 33 minutes on Facebook each month
- Average user visits 40 times per month
- Average user is connected to 80 community pages, groups and events
- 200 million people access Facebook via a mobile device each day
- 51.2% of Facebook users are male; 48.8% are female
- Age groups using Facebook in the United States are:
 - 55-64 – 7%
 - 45-54 – 12%
 - 35-44 – 16%
 - 26-34 – 20%
 - 18-25 – 35%
 - 13-17 – 10%

The flexibility of Facebook is very appealing to tourism marketers as information can be (and should be) updated regularly and the format allows for interactivity with travelers who have visited the destination or are considering a visit. Facebook is also a good place to post notices about updates to the website or new blogs and to direct readers to these sites. As with all social media, success with Facebook depends on a regular presence.

In addition to using the Internet for communications, tourism agencies and heritage attractions are also beginning to use technology as a sales tool through venues such as Groupon and Living Social. Groupon promotes “daily deals” to its subscribers through Facebook or Twitter – (www.groupon.com). Living Social is another discount promotion program using the same format as Groupon (www.livingsocial.com).

Case Study

Belle Meade Plantation

In January 2011, Belle Meade Plantation in Nashville, Tennessee started a Groupon promotion intended to build visitation to the historic site. The promotion offered two tours and two wine tastings at half-price and sold 1,300 tickets, resulting in 2,600 ticket holders who had 60 days to redeem their vouchers. The next promotion, on Living Social, offered a coupon for three days for a Valentine's Day themed tour including a chocolate pairing with wine (the site has a winery and sells wine in the gift shop). The offer resulted in sales of 1,000 tickets. An additional benefit was generating traffic during January and February – months that are traditionally slow at many historic sites.



A Groupon promotion brought visitors to Belle Meade Plantation in the off-season and generated sales in the gift shop.

Photo: Belle Meade Plantation

VII. Organize to facilitate plan development

There are currently two primary organizations focused on tourism planning and promotion for Guilford – the Guilford Preservation Alliance, which is the lead partner in heritage tourism planning, and the Guilford Chamber of Commerce which recently formed a tourism committee with representatives from historic sites, arts organizations and retail merchants.

Assessment visit meetings included discussion about the possibility of forming a Guilford Tourism Council to bring all of the partners together to focus on tourism planning, development and promotion. It is recommended that the decision to officially establish a tourism council be considered when the planning process is further along. This will allow the formation of an organization that reflects the emerging work plan.

During the planning process, an ad hoc committee can be formed to guide the plan's development. (This committee would differ from the chamber committee which focuses exclusively on promotion.) Responsibilities of the ad hoc committee – and eventually of a tourism council – include:

- **Coordination** – All efforts intersect through the tourism committee where committee members know about each attraction, lodging or dining facilities, events and other resources that play a role in welcoming, entertaining and accommodating visitors and looks for ways for all of these tourism entities to work together to build a strong heritage tourism plan.
- **Communication** – The tourism committee's leadership stays in communication with all partners and the community, making sure they know of opportunities to participate in the plan's development and implementation.
- **Promotion** – Creating a detailed marketing plan will guide promotion including advertising, travel industry sales, public relations, social media and other venues.
- **Advocacy** – The committee will collect information and document what is needed to provide a good visitor experience. They will advocate for these needs such as visitor information centers, wayfinding signage, attraction development and hotel, restaurant or retail recruitment.
- **Education** – The committee will look for opportunities to host educational programs such as hospitality training for frontline employees or other instructional programs for the tourism industry.

VIII. Next Steps

An assessment visit and recommendations report is intended to be a first step in development of a heritage tourism plan for Guilford. Once partners have had the opportunity to review the report and consider its recommendations, the next step will be planning a one-day work session. Carolyn Brackett will return to Guilford to facilitate this meeting. The agenda will include a review of the recommendations in the report. Partners will begin to consider which recommendations to incorporate into a heritage tourism plan and will identify action steps including who will be responsible for each strategy and what resources are needed to implement the strategy. The format for the heritage tourism plan will be agreed upon, and partners will work together to map out a timeline for completion of the heritage tourism plan.

Appendix

**Assessment Visit
Meetings Schedule for Carolyn Brackett**

March 20-23, 2012

Tuesday, March 20, 2012

Arrival BDL: 2:00 p.m.

House Museum Visit: 3:45 p.m. -4:30 p.m., Dudley Farm House Museum

Wine and Cheese Reception: 5:30-7:00 p.m., Home of Shirley Girioni, 199 Whitfield Street

Attendees: Sarah Williams, Rick Conrad and Susan Ward, **Guilford Land Trust;** Donita Aruny, Eric Dillner, **Shoreline Arts Alliance;** Vera Guibbory, Kathryn Greene, Janet Testa, **Guilford Green Merchants** and **Guilford Chamber of Commerce;** Sandy Ruoff and Patty Baldwin, **Guilford Free Library;** Jamie McCauley, **Community Activist;** Paul Mei, **National Scenic Hiking Committee;** Liza Petra, **Guilford Foundation;** Maureen Belden and Susan Hens-Kaplan, **Guilford Arts Center;** Carolee Evans, **Guilford Land Acquisitions Commission;** Tom Pinchbeck, **Guilford Agricultural Commission;** David Rosenthal, **Guilford Agricultural Commission;** Rob Vavasour, Shirley Girioni, Harry Haskell, Ellen Ebert and Dennis Culliton, **Guilford Preservation Alliance**

Dinner: 7:30 p.m., Stone House Restaurant

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Meeting with State and Town Elected Officials/Administrators: 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m., Guilford Community Center, Quonnipaug Conference Room

Attendees: State Sen. Ed Meyer, State Representative Pat Widlitz, First Selectman Joe Mazza, Selectpersons Havrda, Cartier, McElhiney and Wallace, Brian McGlone (Economic Development Coordinator), Rick Maynard (Parks and Recreation Director), George Kral (Town Planner)

Lunch: 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Location TBA

House Museum Tours: 12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m., Museum Locations

Docents: Mike McBride, **Henry Whitfield House State Museum;** Katherine Frydenborg, **Hyland House;** Pat Lovelace, Guilford Keeping Society, **Thomas Griswold House**

12:30 p.m. Hyland House

1:00 p.m. Medad Stone Tavern

1:30 p.m. Henry Whitfield House State Museum

Meeting with Deputy Commissioner, Department of Economic and Community Development: 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m., 805 Brook Street, Building 4, Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Attendees: Deputy Commissioner Kip Bergstrom, **DECD**; Rob Vavasour and Shirley Girioni, **GPA-HTI**; Carolyn Brackett, **NTHP**

Dinner: 6:00 p.m., Home of Dennis Culliton

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Meeting with Preservation Organizations: 8:30 a.m.- 10:00 a.m., Home of Shirley Girioni, 199 Whitfield Street

Attendees: Stuart Parnes, **Connecticut Humanities Council**; Helen Higgins, **Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation**

Meeting with Merchant Organizations: 10:30 a.m.- 12:00 p.m., Home of Shirley Girioni, 199 Whitfield Street

Attendees: Kathryn Greene and Vera Guibbory, **Guilford Green Merchants**; Janet Testa, **Guilford Chamber of Commerce**

Lunch: 12:00 p.m.- 1:00 p.m., Location TBA

Meeting with House Museum Organizations: 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., Home of Shirley Girioni, 199 Whitfield Street

Attendees: Pat Lovelace, **Guilford Keeping Society**; Mike Mc Bride, **Henry Whitfield House State Museum**; Katherine Frydenborg, **Hyland House**; Janet Dudley, **Dudley Farm House Museum**; Stuart Parnes, **Connecticut Humanities Council**

Meeting with Arts Organizations: 3:30 p.m. - 5:45 p.m., Guilford Arts Center, 411 Church Street

Attendees: Donita Aruny and Eric Dillner, **Shoreline Arts Alliance**; Maureen Belden and Susan Hens-Kaplan, **Guilford Arts Center**

Dinner: 6:00 p.m., with Mike and Ellen Ebert, Harry Haskell and others.

Friday, March 23, 2012

Meeting with State Tourism Officials: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., One Constitution Plaza, Second Floor, Hartford, Connecticut

Attendees: Randy Fiveash, **Director of Tourism, State of Connecticut**; Karin Peterson, **Director State Museums, State of Connecticut**; Rob Vavasour and Shirley Girioni, **GPA-HTI**; Carolyn Brackett, **NTHP**

Departure BDL: 2:10 p.m.

THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Turning Travelers into Customers

AGENDA

7:30 am	Registration
8:00-8:10 am	Introductions The Honorable Al Huntington, Mayor of Madison John Goss, Director, Indiana Tourism & Film Development Division
8:10-9:30 am (Room A2 & A3)	National, State & Local Tourism Perspectives Margie Johnson, Shop Talk, Virginia Beach, VA Amy Webb, Director, Heritage Tourism Program, National Trust for Historic Preservation Lynne Fuller, Marketing Director, Indiana Tourism & Film Development Division Linda Lytle, Executive Director of Madison Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
9:30-9:45 am	BREAK
9:45-Noon (Room A2 & A3)	Secrets for Success for Tourism Businesses Customer Service and Employee Management Margie Johnson
Noon-1:00 pm (Room A1)	LUNCH (Roundtable Discussions with national, state and local experts)
1:00-2:00 pm (Room A2 & A3)	Effective Marketing Strategies on a Shoestring Margie Johnson
2:00-2:15 pm	BREAK
2:15-3:30 pm (Room A3)	Concurrent Sessions A) Accommodations (<i>Facilitator: Sally McWilliams</i>) Chet Brown, Indiana Bed & Breakfast Assoc.; Owner, Inn at Bethlehem Joy Dickson, Holiday Inn Express - Cloverdale, Indiana Brenna Wohl, LIMC Management
(Room A2)	B) Retail (<i>Facilitator: Margaret Lawrence</i>) Connie Combs, Regional Director, Southeastern IN SBDC Kim Franklin, Executive Director, Madison Main Street Program Liz Taylor, Owner, Poor Richard's Books - Frankfort, Kentucky Maria Huntington, Owner, Cooks & Company, Columbus, Indiana
(Room A1)	C) Restaurants (<i>Facilitator: Betsy Vonderheide</i>) Andy Rogers, Owner, Nashville House, Seasons Lodge, Brown County Inn, Ordinary; Manager, Abe Martin Lodge, Nashville, IN; INTourism Council S.G. Stratigos, Owner, Uptown Cafe, Bloomington, Indiana Chris Wakeman, Owner, Jeeve's (formerly Company's Coming), Scottsburg, Indiana
3:45-4:30 pm (Room A2 & A3)	Collaborative Marketing Strategies Margie Johnson Sally McWilliams, Owner, Media Link, Madison; Regional Marketing Manager, Indiana Tourism
4:30-5:00 pm	Next Steps (<i>Entrepreneur Brainstorming & Partnership Building</i>)

