

**Guilford, Connecticut
Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan
*A Five-Year Plan for
Heritage Tourism Development
2013-2018***



April 2013

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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 dating 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.

Developing a Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan

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. Board members Shirley Girioni and Rob Vavasour were designated as co-chairs for the initiative.

GPA’s mission is to preserve and protect the built and natural heritage of Guilford. This mission has been accomplished through preservation advocacy, public educational 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 to enjoy all the town has to offer and to contribute to Guilford’s economic vitality. Additionally, partners recognized that by working together they could more efficiently use resources, provide assistance to each other and create a unified destination that would be attractive to visitors.

In the following months, GPA forged a network of more than 20 partners including local government agencies, nonprofit organizations and individuals throughout the community as well as state nonprofit and government agencies.

The Planning Process

Development of the strategic plan was a multi-step process that involved numerous partners over a period of almost two years. The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Heritage Tourism Program was retained by GPA to facilitate the assessment and planning process.

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. The National Trust's Heritage Tourism Specialist, 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. GPA concluded the meeting with a commitment to plan an assessment visit to identify and evaluate resources and to assess the potential for heritage tourism development.

In the coming months, a GPA planning committee including Rob Vavasour, and Shirley Girioni worked with Carolyn Brackett to plan the itinerary for an assessment visit. The itinerary was designed to include opportunities to meet with partners and to tour key sites in Guilford. The assessment visit was conducted March 20-23, 2012. An assessment and recommendations report was completed in the summer of 2012.

The next step in the planning process occurred on October 2-3, 2012. On October 2, Carolyn Brackett presented the report's recommendations to the heritage tourism initiative's partners. The presentation set the stage for a workshop on October 3. Partners reviewed the recommendations and worked together to determine strategies that would be included in the strategic plan. Six work groups reviewed plans for heritage products, visitor services, historic house museums, arts and events, the Town Green, and community awareness and involvement.

Following the workshop, all of the ideas were compiled into a draft plan. This plan was the basis of the final planning meetings on January 22-23, 2013. The six work groups met to revisit each strategy and to consider the action steps for implementation.

This heritage tourism strategic plan represents the ideas, enthusiasm and commitment of numerous partners. Implementation of these strategies will position Guilford as a heritage tourism destination. Success will be measured in the increased interest in Guilford's history and culture, commitment to preservation of historic resources and contribution to sustainable economic development.

Heritage Tourism Partners

Shirley Girioni – Guilford Preservation Alliance, co-chair, Heritage Tourism Initiative

Rob Vavasour – Guilford Preservation Alliance, co-chair, Heritage Tourism Initiative

Harry Haskell – Guilford Preservation Alliance, President

Ellen and Mike Ebert – Guilford Preservation Alliance

Dennis and Linda Culliton – Guilford Preservation Alliance

Ellie Green – 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

Pam Bisbee Simonds – Shoreline Greenway Trail

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
Veronica Soell – 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

Goals of the Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan

Based on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's *Five Principles for Successful and Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism*, the following goals are identified for Guilford's Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan:

Collaborate

Build a wide network of partners representing all aspects of Guilford's heritage, culture, natural resources who will work together to develop a successful heritage tourism program.

Find the Fit between the Community and Tourism

Implement plans that benefit residents by creating opportunities for involvement, increasing community pride and awareness of Guilford's heritage and generating economic impact.

Makes Sites and Programs Come Alive

Tell Guilford's story through a variety of sites, programs and events that bring to life the town's interesting history.

Focus on Authenticity and Quality

Ensure that all plans are of the highest quality and that the visitor's experience of Guilford's history is based on accurate research and presentation.

Preserve and Protect Resources

Encourage and support the preservation and protection of historic structures, collections and natural resources that help create a unique visitor experience and enhance the quality of life for residents.

Components of the Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan

The heritage tourism strategic plan is divided into five sections:

Visitor Experience

Events

Visitor Services

Infrastructure

Marketing

In each section, strategies include a description and action steps. A chart shows the project lead, partners and timeline, indicating short-term and long-term implementation targets.

The plan includes two additional pieces:

- **Master Calendar** - A master calendar which includes each strategy and its implementation timeline.
- **Costs and Funding** - A template showing each strategy with sections for indicating costs and funding sources. Because most costs and funding sources were unknown during the plan's development, this template can be completed as plans are implemented and this information becomes available. This will allow for long-term tracking of the investment from many sources.

Implementation

The heritage tourism plan outlines a collection of strategies and action steps to be implemented over a five-year period, 2013-2018. The Guilford Preservation Alliance has committed to provide leadership and partners have committed volunteer service and resources to implement the plan.

An essential part of a successful heritage tourism plan is tracking implementation. GPA and its partners will regularly evaluate their progress and document success or challenges in implementation.

Recognizing that strategic plans are dynamic documents that can change in response to new opportunities or circumstances, GPA and its partners will revise the plan as needed to accommodate these changes.

GPA and its partners will also seek opportunities to celebrate success through various organization awards, local publicity and other venues.

I. The Visitor Experience: Sharing Guilford's Story and Sense of Place

The National Trust for Historic Preservation describes a sense of place as "those things that add up to a feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from anywhere else." The town of Guilford exudes a sense of place – from the carefully kept Town Green to historic neighborhoods to the beautiful shoreline. Anyone who spends a little time in Guilford will discover that in addition to the built and natural environment, it is a real community, filled with artistic creativity, pride in the town's history and overflowing with events and activities to engage both residents and visitors.

The strategies in this section outline heritage tourism products that will offer new ways to share Guilford's story in a compelling visitor experience. A heritage tourism product is defined as a *heritage-themed experience that can be provided to visitors to engage them in a destination and encourage them to stay longer or plan return visits.*

These strategies reflect two of the goals for the strategic plan: **Make Sites and Programs Come Alive** and **Focus on Authenticity and Quality.**

Strategy 1.1 Offer historic walking tours

In the summer of 2012, the successful introduction of guided walking tours demonstrated the opportunity to engage residents and visitors in experiencing Guilford's history and to generate economic impact through new heritage-themed activities. Two tours were offered – the Guilford History Tour and the Guilford Architecture Tour. Tour guides also noted that tour participants made purchases in downtown stores and restaurants and toured other historic sites in Guilford.



Walking tours attracted more than 300 participants in the first year.

The research that was undertaken to develop the tours ensured they were accurate presentations of Guilford's history, and the extensive training of tour guides made the tours lively and engaging. The tours set an excellent precedent for the development of new programs, tours and other activities focused on Guilford's heritage.

Action Steps

- Offer tours on Saturdays and Sundays from June through September.
- Offer tours by appointment as feasible.
- Continue to research and add historical content to enhance tours.
- Recruit, train and monitor effectiveness of tour guides.
- Track demographic information for tour participants.
- Maintain presence on historicguilford.org to sell tickets and promote tours.
- Sell tickets at selected stores on the Town Green and at the information kiosk.
- Prepare annual report on attendance, revenues and publicity.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Ongoing	Guilford Preservation Alliance Dennis Culliton	

Strategy 1.2 Develop interpretive signage

Interpretive signage is a tool used by many communities to tell their story to visitors. Interpretive signage will make it possible to share Guilford’s story with visitors at any time (unlike scheduled tours of sites that may have limited hours.) Interpretive signage can also include QR codes (quick response). By scanning the QR code with a smart phone, a visitor can access additional information about the site or story introduced on the sign.

By strategically selecting locations for placement, the signs will be easily seen and will encourage visitors to explore Guilford by stopping at each sign. Development of interpretive signage is part of a larger project to develop and share Guilford’s story with visitors through a variety of media including an information kiosk (Strategy 1.3) and other venues.



Interpretive signage will help tell Guilford’s story to visitors.

The planning process includes development of a thematic framework which will be used to determine the topics for each sign. A planning grant application was awarded by the Connecticut Humanities Council in April 2013 to support the plan’s development. The following action steps reflect the process described in the grant application. Implementation action steps are also included (and would require additional funding beyond the planning grant.)

Action Steps

- Apply for Connecticut Humanities Council planning grant (awarded).
- Establish content experts committee.
- Retain consultants to facilitate research and design process.
- Implement civic engagement (public meeting, student forum, focus groups).
- Consultant to develop “white paper” with a recommended thematic framework.
- Designer to prepare signage design, determine locations and provide fabrication costs.
- Coordinate with plans for visitor information kiosk. (See Strategy 1.3)
- Apply for Connecticut Humanities Council implementation grant.
- Prepare content, fabricate and install signage.

In addition to the plans outlined above which are being spearheaded by the Guilford Preservation Alliance, development plans for the Shoreline Greenway Trail also include plans for interpretive signage along the trail route. This provides an opportunity to extend the visitor experience to learn not only about Guilford’s history but about the surrounding topography and natural resources of the area. Coordination of these signage projects will ensure a cohesive visitor experience.

Action Steps

- Select locations for signage along the greenway trail.
- Prepare content for signs.
- Coordinate signage design with signs developed for the town (above).
- Fabricate and install signage.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Planning – Short-term – town signs (6 months – 1 year)	<u>Guilford Preservation Alliance</u> Shirley Girioni Rob Vavasour	<u>History Experts Committee:</u> Dennis Culliton Joel Helander Carl Balestracci
Implementation – Short-term – town signs (1-2 years)	<u>Guilford Preservation Alliance</u> Shirley Girioni Rob Vavasour	Town of Guilford Signage locations
Planning – Short-term – Shoreline Greenway signs (6 months – 1 year)	<u>Shoreline Greenway Trail</u> Pam Simonds Milton Charlton	
Implementation – Long-term – Shoreline Greenway Trail (2-5 years)	<u>Shoreline Greenway Trail</u> Pam Simonds Milton Charlton	

Strategy 1.3 Develop an information kiosk near the Town Green

Currently the Whitfield State Museum provides the only information center in Guilford. The site is open Wednesday through Sunday from early May through mid-December. To make information consistently available to Guilford’s visitors, developing an information kiosk that is available year-round is an essential part of a successful tourism program.

Development of a plan for the information kiosk is part of the grant awarded by the Connecticut Humanities Council discussed in Strategy 1.2. Coordinating plans for the information kiosk with interpretive signage to be placed throughout the town will create a cohesive storyline and experience for visitors.



An information kiosk near the Town Green will provide information for tourists.

The goal is to provide information about Guilford’s history, its historic, cultural and natural resources as well as visitor services such as shopping and dining. By establishing a place to share information, Guilford will set the stage for welcoming visitors and help them learn how to experience Guilford.

Plans call for volunteer staffing during the summer months as well as interactive screens (available year-round) and interpretive exhibit panels with information needed by tourists to plan their visit and to learn about Guilford's history. In the summer months, staff will sell tickets for the walking tours as well as selling historic guidebooks, distributing maps and providing information about things to see and do in Guilford. In other months, the kiosk will function as a self-serve information center with information available through interactive screens, exhibit panels and brochures. The kiosk will be located at the southwest corner of the Town Green.

Action Steps

- An architect will be retained to guide the process of initial schematics and obtaining approvals from the Town of Guilford. The architect will review existing surveys and create a site plan. Site documentation will include photography and site measurements. Using computer modeling, a photo montage and two dimensional drawings, the architect will develop and present one or two options for the kiosk.
- The architect will assist GPA in presenting the proposal to the town staff and First Selectman. Once local support is obtained, an architectural proposal will be developed.
- The development of interpretive themes will inform plans for content development of the interactive screens and exhibit panels as well as the printed materials that will be stocked at the kiosk. The thematic framework will also serve as the basis for training volunteers to tell visitors where they can visit sites in Guilford to experience the town's history.
- A designer will provide costs for purchasing of equipment, programming and maintenance of interactive screens and for design and fabrication of exhibit panels.
- Construct information kiosk according to approved plans.
- Develop maintenance schedule for electronic (interactive screens) and stocking materials such as brochures and maps.
- Recruit and train volunteers to staff kiosk in the summer months. Develop a staffing plan and schedule.

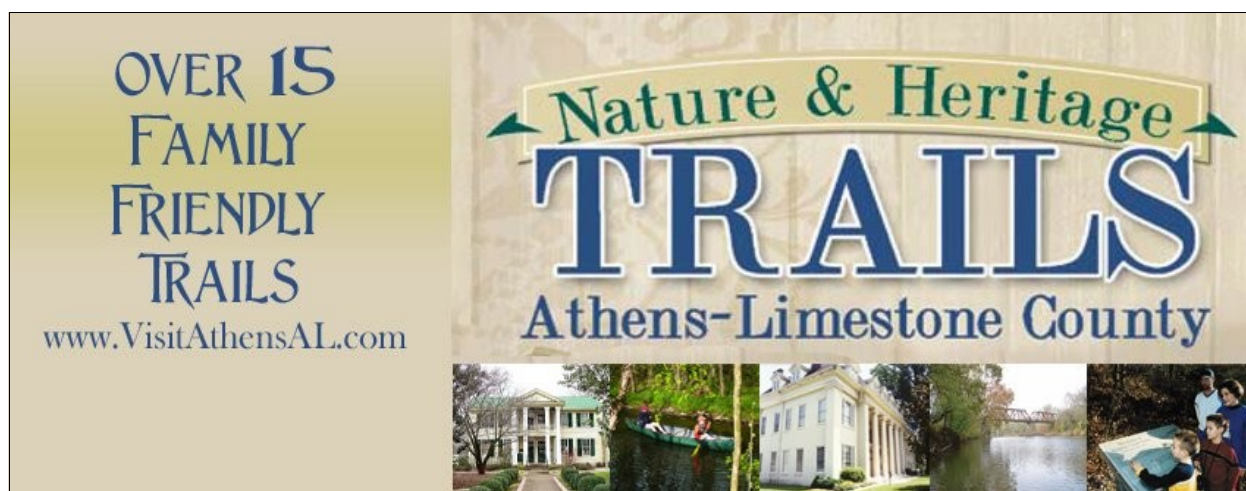


A visitor information kiosk will provide information to help tourists plan their visit to Guilford. Pictured is the visitor information kiosk in Denton, Maryland.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Planning – Short-term (6 months – 1 years)	<u>Guilford Preservation Alliance</u> Shirley Girioni Rob Vavasour	<u>Architect</u> Russell Campaigne <u>History Experts Committee:</u> Dennis Culliton Joel Helander Carl Balestracci
Implementation – Short-term (1-2 years)	<u>Guilford Preservation Alliance</u> Shirley Girioni Rob Vavasour	Town of Guilford

Strategy 1.4 Develop new tour opportunities

Building on the success of the guided walking tours, development of new tour options will create a variety of ways for visitors to experience Guilford’s history and will encourage longer stays and return visits. Tours can target audiences ranging from visitors coming to Guilford for a day trip to tour groups to niche audiences who would enjoy combining a hobby, such as photography and biking, with a visit to Guilford. Tourism partners can increase the number of options for visitors by not only creating new ways to experience Guilford, but by offering tour experiences on a variety of topics including the downtown, historic neighborhoods, arts/artists, and recreational/nature areas where tours could focus on a range of interests from the area’s history to bird watching to landscape features. Additionally, the creation of heritage trails will build partnerships with neighboring communities to create thematic tours to extend a visitor’s stay and encourage repeat visitation.



Heritage and natural trails offer new ways for visitors to explore a destination.

Action Steps

- Review thematic framework document (created as part of the interpretive signage/kiosk development) and identify potential tour topics.
- Survey other communities for information on successful tours. Gather information on the types of tours that are most successful with visitors.
- Develop plans for audio/video tours after identifying desired tours topics. Choose appropriate technology (smart phone or cell phone). Retain audio tour development specialist to assist with script development and tour production.
- Create a 45-50 minute bus tour for senior citizens and assisted living facility residents, incorporating the walking tour and other historic neighborhoods. Offer tour locally and in the surrounding region.
- Research opportunities to develop thematic heritage trail driving tours with Branford, Madison, Clinton and other nearby communities. Create tours as partnerships develop.
- Develop a photography tour. Identify locations and create a guide offering suggestions for historic buildings, scenery, festivals, artisans and other photography opportunities in and around Guilford. Promote through photography clubs. Set up a Flickr™ site and invite photographers to post pictures.
- Develop bike tours, building on the success of the Shoreline Greenway Trail’s summer bike tour.
- Include the Shoreline Arts Trail in promotion of tour opportunities.
- Create printed brochures and include information on all tour options on appropriate websites.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term – Photography Tour	(Ellen to look for a lead)	
Short-term – Bus Tour	Girl Scouts	
Short-term—Bike Tours	Shoreline Greenway Trail	
Long-term – Audio Tours; Heritage Trails	Guilford Preservation Alliance	Guilford Keeping Society Dudley Farm Foundation First Congregational Church Joel Helander Carl Balestracci

Strategy 1.5 Develop “400 Years of History” experience at historic house museums

Guilford’s five historic house museums – Henry Whitfield State Museum, Hyland House, Medad Stone Tavern, Thomas Griswold House Museum and Dudley Farm House Museum – are the foundation of Guilford’s heritage tourism experience. Collectively, they interpret Guilford’s history:

- The Henry Whitfield house dates to 1639. It is the oldest house in Connecticut and the oldest stone house in New England. Visitors can learn about the state’s settlement and life in colonial times.
- Hyland House was built in the late 17th-early 18th centuries and interprets colonial life and architecture.
- The Thomas Griswold house was built circa 1774. The home has been restored and furnished in early 19th century style.
- Medad Stone Tavern was built in 1803 and was a private home until it opened to the public in 2001.
- The Dudley Farm House was built in 1844, and the site is interpreted as a late 19th century farm.

The history of these house museums offers an opportunity not found in many communities across the country – a venue to create a visitor experience of 400 years of history. Directors at the historic house museums will work together to identify key themes from their site’s time period and will then collaborate to create a unique tour experience. These plans will also be coordinated with the development of the thematic framework for Guilford (Strategy 1.2).

Once the thematic storyline for the five sites is developed, a promotional package will be created to let visitors know about the tours. Although the sites have varying operating schedules, all are open during the summer months and all are open on Thursday, Friday and Saturday during these months. The “400 Years” tour experience promotion will be targeted for June through August on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.



Action Steps

- Site managers will share current tour scripts and discuss themes that represent each era of Guilford’s history.
- Using the identified themes, new tour scripts will be developed (or current scripts adapted) to reflect the progression of history at each site.
- The “400 years” tour script will be shared with tour guides at all five sites.
- Site managers will determine the schedule for the “400 years” tour promotion (confirm days and months).
- Promotional materials (press release, website content, brochures, etc.) will be developed to publicize the “400 years” tours.
- Attendance will be tracked during the tour promotion to document responses.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term 6 months – 2 years	Mike McBride, Pat Lovelace Veronica Soell	Janet Dudley Town of Guilford - ECD

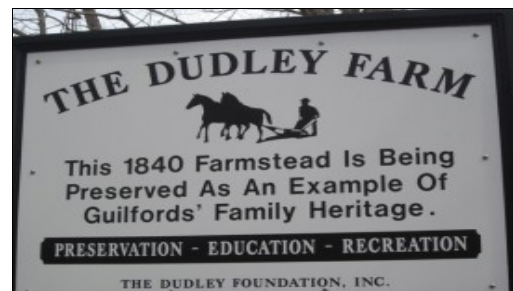
Strategy 1.6 Plan programs to increase involvement of children at historic house museums

Guilford’s historic house museums have a long tradition of offering programs and events to appeal to children. Early Guilford Days is a curriculum-based school program that engages fourth graders in learning about Guilford’s history. Children can also enjoy everything from seeing the farm animals at Dudley Farm to touring exhibits at Whitfield State Museum.

Numerous academic studies confirm the importance of helping children learn history –



creating identity, encouraging good citizenship and building community pride are a few of the reasons commonly noted.



In future years, residents who were engaged in learning about Guilford’s history when they were children may be more likely to become involved in the town’s heritage tourism efforts.

Action Steps

- Site managers will share information on current programs, events and activities that target children through school programs or families visiting the sites.
- Plans will be developed for new programs, events and activities that are complementary and not duplicated by the sites.
- Volunteer needs for expanded programming will be identified and a recruitment plan will be implemented.
- New programs will be tested and evaluated before becoming permanent offerings for each site.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Long-term	Mike McBride, Pat Lovelace Veronica Soell, Janet Dudley	

Strategy 1.7 Develop art exhibits and place in high traffic areas

There are a many talented artists in Guilford who exhibit and sell their works at local galleries and through events such as the Guilford Arts Center’s annual Craft Expo and the Shoreline Art Trail’s Open Studios Weekend. National research on cultural heritage travelers shows that local arts are an important part of their travel experience with more than half saying they enjoy visiting art museums or galleries and that they make it a point to shop for local arts and crafts.

Placing art exhibits in high traffic areas such as restaurant lobbies or storefront windows (and at the information kiosk when it opens) will create a new way to showcase artists year-round. Small-scale exhibits can include painting, photography, sculpture, textiles and other art forms. If an exhibit is placed in an area where security could be a concern, poster-size images of the art can be substituted. Exhibits will also include labels with information about the artist and where to buy the artwork.

This project will not only offer ways for artists to sell their works, but it will enhance the visitor experience by letting them get to know some of the artists in Guilford, either by reading the exhibit labels or even having the opportunity to meet the artist in his/her gallery or studio. The project can start on a small scale, with two or three exhibits, and can grow based on interest and available locations.

Action Steps

- Identify locations where art exhibits could be placed.
- Determine what types of exhibits would be appropriate in selected locations.
- Identify artists whose works could be showcased.
- Obtain permission from selected locations and contact artists to offer the opportunity to exhibit.
- Develop a schedule for each location and include contact information for the location and the artist.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term 6 months – 2 years	Maureen Belden	Edie Brown

Strategy 1.8 Share Guilford’s story with residents

Some of Guilford’s stories have been well documented in publications, at historic sites and in the walking tours. There are many experiences of Guilford’s residents – past and present - which contribute to the overall fabric of the community. The town’s 375th anniversary celebration in 2014 provides an occasion to share lesser known (or unknown) stories in a variety of ways.

Action Steps

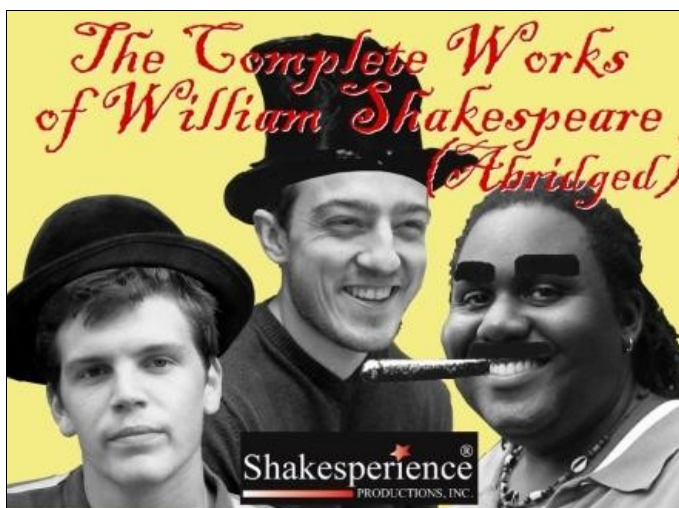
- Investigate the possibility of high school and college students creating a video with interviews of Guilford residents to show on Guilford cable television and to post on websites.
- Seek opportunities to host the Connecticut Humanities Council’s exhibit, *Connecticut at Work*, and to coordinate a complementary exhibit on Guilford.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term	Edie Brown	

II. Events: Bring Guilford's History and Culture to Life

There are many events offered in Guilford throughout the year that appeal to residents and visitors including the annual Craft Expo, Taste of the Shoreline, Shakespeare on the Shoreline, Guilford Fair, Light Up the Green and Holiday Tree Lighting and others.

Events can serve many purposes in a community. They can commemorate historical events, showcase local talent, offer educational opportunities, sell local products and provide opportunities for residents to gather and for tourists to visit.



Shakespeare on the Shoreline is one of many events offered throughout the year in Guilford.

In 2014, Guilford will celebrate the 375th anniversary of the town's settlement. Anniversary celebrations will incorporate some existing events and will also create new events designed to highlight aspects of the town's history such as the Covenant signed by founders in 1639. Based on positive responses, some anniversary events may become legacies of the anniversary and cornerstones of the heritage tourism program.

Events to be developed for the heritage tourism program are discussed in this section. In some cases, the determination has already been made to develop an event. In other cases, the commitment is to explore the opportunity to develop an event or to introduce the event on a small scale and monitor the response before committing to long-term development.

Strategy 2.1 Guilford's Doors Open Month

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 - all targeted to local residents. The concept has spread to 48 European countries (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/EPresentation_en.asp). Heritage Canada also offers organizational assistance to communities (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doors_Open_Canada)

As the concept gained popularity over the years, Doors Open has become not only an event for residents – many Doors Open events are successful in attracting tourists as well. For example, the Essex National Heritage Area in Massachusetts hosts a two-weekend event with more than 200 activities showcasing cultural, heritage and natural sites which draws thousands of visitors from throughout the region. Activities are free, and the event is underwritten by sponsors.

In Connecticut, the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, coordinates and promotes the annual Connecticut Open House Day. The event is scheduled the second Saturday of June. Cultural organizations and tourism attractions throughout the state open their doors to Connecticut residents, inviting them to explore Connecticut historic and cultural attractions.

Guilford's heritage tourism partners used both of these concepts to develop a new event – Guilford's Doors Open Month – to begin in June 2014. Partners agreed that because there are many events happening in Guilford in the month of June, extending the event to encompass the whole month would have more impact than limiting it to one weekend. Events which take place on the second Saturday in June can also be promoted through Connecticut Open House Day.

The key to a successful Doors Open event is offering free or reduced admission. Sponsorships will help underwrite the cost of the event. Participating sites should also look for opportunities to generate revenue through gift shop sales, membership sales and other methods. Existing events can also be promoted under the "umbrella" of Doors Open.



Connecticut Open House Day is held each year on the second Saturday in June.

Among the events which can be included in Guilford's Doors Open Month area:

- Guilford Historic Walking Tours – Residents could be invited to take the tours for free during one weekend of Doors Open Month if they bring a friend from out of town who purchases a ticket.
- Early Guilford Days – This new event will build on the success of the heritage education-based program and will target families. (More information in the next section.)
- 400 Years of History – This new interpretive and promotional program showcases four centuries of history which visitors can experience at Guilford's historic house museums. (Strategy 1.5)
- Historic House Museums – Sites could offer free admission on selected days throughout the month. Additional programs such as lectures and behind-the-scenes tours could be offered.



The Guilford Land Conservation Trust's nature hikes appeal to visitors and residents.

- Town Green and Historic Neighborhoods – Behind-the-scenes tours of historic buildings could be offered to provide a glimpse into seldom-seen buildings and to explore Guilford's history from new perspectives.
- Nature Walks – The Guilford Land Conservation Trust could offer guided hikes to explore the area's natural resources.
- Covenant Days – This event is part of the 375th anniversary celebration to commemorate Guilford's founding.
- Dining and shopping discounts – Special discounts for dining and shopping in Guilford's local restaurants and stores can be offered through destinationdiscounts.com, a promotional program of the Guilford Chamber of Commerce's tourism committee.

Action Steps

- Review other Doors Open events to gather ideas for activities and programs.
- Partners will meet to discuss activities, programs and events – both existing and new - which can be included as part of Doors Open Month.
- Determine which events can be offered free or discounts that can be offered.
- Develop a month-long schedule of events.
- Obtain written commitments from all partners to participate in Doors Open Month.
- Develop a budget for promotion of Doors Open Month.
- Identify potential sponsors; submit proposals and obtain sponsorships.
- Track attendance at Doors Open events.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Long-term (2-5 years)	Guilford Preservation Alliance (?)	Historic house museums Chamber tourism committee Land Conservation Trust Town ECD

Strategy 2.2 Early Guilford Days

Early Guilford Days is a heritage education program developed by a group of retired teachers almost 20 years ago to enhance Guilford’s fourth grade Colonial history curriculum. The program includes a network of partners including the Guilford Keeping Society, Dorothy Whitfield Historic Society and the Guilford Preservation Alliance. Students enjoy visiting historic sites, participating in historical scavenger hunts and other games and studying the history of Guilford’s early days.

Activities created for Early Guilford Days will be the foundation of a new Early Guilford Days event which will be designed for families and will include all of Guilford’s historic house museums. The event will take place over a weekend in June, starting in 2014, and will be part of Doors Open Month, a month-long celebration of Guilford’s history and culture. (Strategy 2.1.)

Action Steps

- Review activities developed for Early Guilford Days’ school program.
- Select activities which can become part of the family-oriented Early Guilford Days event.
- Develop additional activities which would appeal to families to become part of the new event. Research similar events in other communities to gather ideas (if needed).
- Obtain commitments from all historic house museums to participate in the event.
- Set dates for first event (possible dates are June 7-9, 2014 to coordinate with the 375th anniversary’s Covenant Day event).
- Develop promotional materials to publicize the event.
- Track attendance and conduct evaluation to determine if Early Guilford Days will become an annual event.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term (1 year)	Historic house museums	Town ECD

Strategy 2.3 Historic House Museums Progressive Dinner

Plans to host a progressive dinner will give visitors a chance to be treated to an exclusive evening tour of Guilford’s historic house museums and to enjoy dining on local specialties. To allow time to include all five sites, the schedule can include a brief tour upon arrival followed by the dinner course (drinks, appetizers, salad/soup, entrée, dessert). While dining on the entrée, attendees can enjoy hearing a short presentation by a historian about some of the unique aspects of Guilford’s history. Musical entertainment can also be included at one or more of the stops. The meal could be provided by local restaurants to showcase a different restaurant at each stop. The progressive dinner is planned to debut as a 375th anniversary event in 2014 with plans to continue offering it as an annual event.



Guilford’s historic house museums will offer an elegant setting for a progressive dinner.

Action Steps

- Site managers will develop the progressive dinner tour route and determine how many people can be accommodated.
- Consider each site’s calendar of events and select a date that can be accommodated at all sites.
- Determine where the dinner guests can be hosted – inside or outside the historic site.
- Transportation plans will include considering a shuttle service between sites.
- Contact local restaurants who can provide catering services to invite participation. Work with restaurants to determine the menu.
- Develop an event budget to include staffing, food costs, promotions and administration. Based on overall costs, determine the event ticket price.
- Develop and implement promotional plan.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term (1 year)	Historic house museums	Local restaurants; Town ECD

Strategy 2.4 Guilford Chautauqua

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).

Since the 1970s, interest in Chautauquas has been revived with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and many state humanities councils as well as other organizations. No Chautauquas were found currently in Connecticut, creating an opportunity to develop a signature event for Guilford.

Heritage tourism partners plan to introduce a Chautauqua in Guilford in 2015. This year is the target date for several reasons: 1) It allows assessment of events in 2014 as part of the 375th anniversary celebration to determine if some events may become part of the Chautauqua, 2) It allows adequate time to plan a high quality event with a strong educational component, and 3) If planners seek funding from the Connecticut Humanities Council, the application will not compete with others that may be submitted to support activities for the town's 375th anniversary.



Chautauquas began in the late 19th century and have enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in recent years.

Elements of a Guilford Chautauqua on the Town Green could include:

- **Music** – Performances could include choirs from the historic churches surrounding the Town Green, the New Haven Symphony and talented local, state and regional musicians.
- **Historical personalities** – Connecticut's famous 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** – 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.

Action Steps

- Develop a planning calendar including time for research, program selection and development, fundraising and promotion.
- Investigate successful Chautauqua events in other communities for ideas to incorporate into Guilford’s event.
- Determine elements to include – music, historical re-enactments, tours, lectures, etc. Consider the thematic framework developed for Guilford as part of the interpretive planning process (Strategy 1.2)
- Obtain commitments from local partners for participation.
- Create a budget and seek funding, such as a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council, to support the event.
- Obtain commitments from performers, lecturers, etc. who will be brought in for the event.
- Create a tracking system to measure attendance at each activity.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Long-term (2-5 years)	Kathryn Greene – Guilford Green Merchants Maureen Belden – Guilford Arts Center Ellie Green – Guilford Preservation Alliance	Guilford Library Historic house museums

Strategy 2.5 Poetry Festival

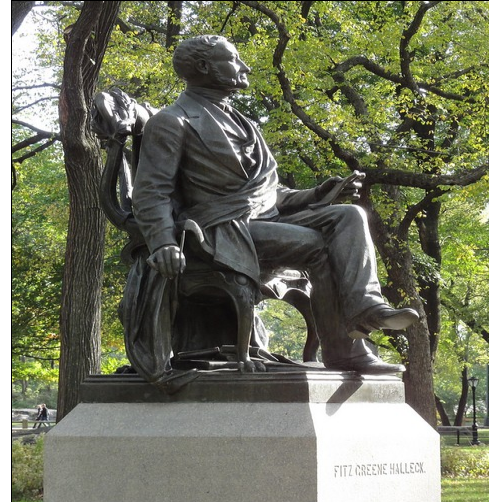
Guilford has the distinction of being the hometown of 19th century poet Fitz-Greene Halleck. Halleck was one of America’s best known and most widely read poets in the 19th century. In 1877, a statue of Halleck was dedicated on Central Park’s Literary Walk. President Rutherford B. Hayes spoke at the event which was attended by 10,000 people.

Guilford has an active Poets Guild which meets regularly to discuss poetry. The Guild hosts poetry readings by members and guests and has published an anthology of Guilford poets.

These connections – a famous poet from Guilford and local interest in poetry- give credence of developing a Guilford Poetry Festival as a new event. Heritage tourism partners plan to introduce a poetry festival on a small scale in 2013 by planning a half-hour presentation to precede the Shakespeare Festival, produced by Shoreline Arts Alliance, on the Town Green in August. The event will grow into a free-standing festival over the next few years to engage a larger audience focused entirely on poetry.

Action Steps

- Planners meet with Shoreline Arts Alliance staff to plan logistics for poetry readings in advance of the Shakespeare performances.
- Determine desired poetry themes focused on connections to Guilford’s history.
- Identify poets and confirm participation.
- Develop plans for a free-standing event including selecting the time of year, length of event, number of participants and event elements (such as readings, lectures and educational programs.)

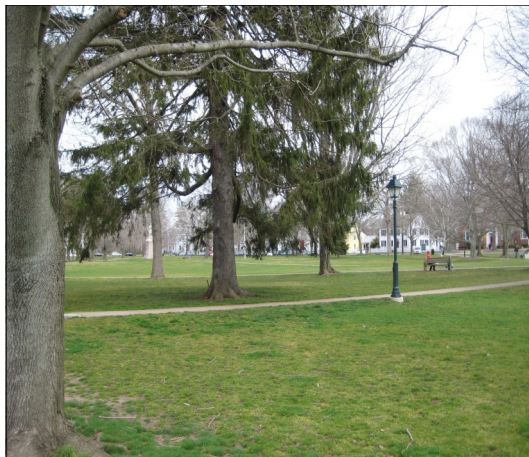


Fitz-Greene Halleck was one of the best known poets of the 19th century.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term (1-2 years)	Kathryn Greene – Guilford Green Merchants Guilford Poetry Guild	Shoreline Arts Alliance

Strategy 2.6 Raking of the Green

By the late 19th century, as the Town Green became a public park and the centerpiece of the downtown, the ladies of Guilford decided to help beautify the Green by raking dead leaves that covered the grounds. According to a



historical account from 1877, the beautification effort turned into a lively event: "Some of the ladies dressed in antique style of big bonnet and ruffles for head-dress. They marched onto the Green in divisions, raking according to the direction of the wind.... and as the piles of dead leaves were raked up men drove in with wagons, loaded and carried them off. The raking done, each lady shouldered her rake and went home, content that she had put the Village Green in as good trim as her own parlor."

A Raking of the Green will re-enact a historical event from the late 19th century.

For Guilford’s 350th anniversary, the town’s garden clubs recreated the raking of the green. The upcoming 375th anniversary offers an occasion to once again recreate the activity.

Action Steps

- Select a date for the event in coordination with other 375th anniversary events.
- Determine if the event will become an ongoing activity of the Heritage Tourism Program.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term (1 year)		

III. Visitor Services: Welcoming Visitors to Guilford

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.

Strategy 1.3 discusses an important visitor service – creation of a visitor information kiosk. (Information on the kiosk is located in the visitor experience section because of its interpretive components and connection to interpretive signage plans).

This section describes strategies that address visitor needs including information on things to see and do, the ease of finding their way around town, opportunities to make purchases and feeling welcomed during their visit.

Strategy 3.1 Plan for wayfinding signage

For tourists, visiting Guilford 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 – so that visitors don't miss out on all there is to see and do in Guilford. Wayfinding signage will include placement of signs at the town's gateways as well as directional signage to historic sites, the Town Green, recreational and scenic locations.

In the fall of 2012, the Town of Guilford began planning for new signage by applying for a grant to the state of Connecticut's Main Street Investment program. If awarded, the grant will fund the first phase of directional signage and parking lot signage for the Town Green. (As of the publication of this strategic plan in early 2013, there had not yet been notification of the grant award or decline.)



Signage helps visitors easily find their way in a community.

- **Historic house museums brochure** – Guilford’s historic house museums have a variety of operating hours, days and months due to factors including the availability of volunteer tour guides and, in the case of Hyland House, the lack of heat during the winter months. A printed piece that communicates the operating schedule for each site will make it easier for visitors to plan their trip. (Site managers plan to work together to more closely align operating schedules over the long-term.)

Action Steps

- Review existing tear-off maps and create a basic design for Guilford’s map.
- Gather information on attractions, dining, shopping and other activities.
- Gather information from all historic house museums on days/months/ hours of operation, admission charges.
- Obtain sponsorship(s) to underwrite design and printing costs for both pieces.
- Retain a graphic designer to design the maps and the historic house museum brochure.
- Develop a distribution plan and reprint schedule for the maps and brochure.
- Determine locations for brochure racks. Identify vendor and offer brochure distribution to Guilford attractions.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term (1 year) – Tear-off maps		
Short-term (1 year) – Historic House Museum brochure	Pat Lovelace Veronica Soell Mike McBride	Town of Guilford ECD
Short-term (1 year) – brochure racks	Town of Guilford ECD	

Strategy 3.3 Develop an ambassador hospitality program

Communities that successfully welcome tourists and become desirable destinations are those that address hospitality by reaching out to front-line employees who are directly engaged in the tourism industry and to residents who need to be aware of the importance of tourism to their local economy and to be prepared to welcome visitors to Guilford:

- **Front-line training** – Employees in retail establishments, restaurants and other venues which are patronized by tourists must understand that visitors have unique needs that are often different from residents. As tourism increases, it will be essential for merchants to know how to welcome and accommodate visitors. There are many training programs available to help front-line workers learn how to interact with visitors.
- **Community residents** - According to the Tourism Works for America Council, “a truly successful hospitality program is community wide.” Target audiences include elected officials and government policymakers, business leaders, community leaders, educators, students and the local media. An ambassador program for this audience can include information such as economic impact reports, special tours (such as those offered in the Doors Open event), and informational training sessions.

Action Steps

- Research front-line employee hospitality programs including the New Haven program and others through the Connecticut Main Street Program.
- Develop a hospitality training program for front-line employees focused on serving tourists. Develop as a train-the-trainer program so ongoing training can be provided in a cost effective manner. Offer the program to all businesses in Guilford that interact with visitors.
- Research community ambassador programs through the Connecticut Main Street Program and the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism.
- Develop a community-based program with elements such as information packets, training sessions and a media campaign.
- Create general information resources – facts on tourism’s economic impact, attractions, tour options, events, etc. – to post on websites and to use in the media campaign.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term – research training programs	Janet Testa – Chamber of Commerce	Guilford Green Merchants
Long-term – front-line training	Town of Guilford Tourism Committee - Chamber of Commerce	Guilford Green Merchants Guilford Preservation Alliance
Long-term – community training	Town of Guilford Tourism Committee- Chamber of Commerce	Guilford Green Merchants Guilford Preservation Alliance

Strategy 3.4 Create souvenir products

Most visitor research studies show that shopping is a primary activity for tourists who like to have something to remind them of their travels. Guilford’s local artists offer many handmade items ranging from jewelry to pottery and paintings that appeal to visitors. In addition, having a selection of traditional tourism souvenirs with a variety of price points allows visitors choices of mementos from their trip. Plans for the 375th anniversary include creating a line of souvenir products. Research on production costs and sales prices for these items can help inform plans for Guilford’s souvenir products for tourists.



Action Steps

- Work with merchandisers to determine items that would appeal to visitors such as t-shirts, pencils, hats, tote bags, post cards, etc.
- Identify sale locations and confirm with merchants.
- Select and contract with vendor to produce souvenirs.
- Track sales of merchandise.
- Determine use for profits to fund heritage tourism program activities.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term - research Long-term – product development and sales	Ellen Ebert	375 th anniversary committee

Strategy 3.5 Shuttle service for special events

Attendance at events in Guilford ranges from a few hundred to thousands. This can create transportation challenges for attendees who must find a place to park and then walk to the event location. For those with limited mobility, this can present an obstacle to attending an event. Shuttle service during special events can address this transportation need. The Town of Guilford’s Parks and Recreation department has several shuttle buses (used for the seniors program) that may be available at certain times to provide transportation for special events. A pilot program at an event such as the historic house museums progressive dinner will allow this service to be tested and expanded if successful.

Action Steps

- Explore the feasibility of offering trolley service during special events. Evaluate costs, legal requirements, etc.
- Select an event to pilot the program.
- Evaluate success and determine if the program should be expanded.
- Develop guidelines for offering the shuttle service and inform event managers of shuttle availability.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term	Town of Guilford – Parks and Recreation Department; ECD	Historic house museums

Strategy 3.6 Feasibility study for train station visitor center

Guilford is fortunate to have Shoreline East service. Currently serving primarily as a commuter railroad, promotions could be developed 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 mechanical 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 mechanical building for a nonprofit resource center, offices or retail.

A feasibility study can answer questions on what is needed to restore the buildings for reuse, how much parking will be needed and other development issues including costs.

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. Ten 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 10 activities is found at http://www.ta-clearinghouse.info/10_definitions.



A feasibility study will explore the possibility of placing a visitor center at the train station.

Action Steps

- Conduct feasibility study for reuse of buildings.
- Evaluate feasibility and make a determination on proceeding with plans.
- Investigate funding from the Transportation Enhancement Program or other sources.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Long-term	Town of Guilford GPA	AMTRAK

IV. Infrastructure: Build the Destination

As tourism begins to grow in Guilford, infrastructure development to support increased visitation will be essential to accommodate tourists and generate the desired economic impact.

An important distinction must be made between creating a *sustainable tourism destination* and what is often referred to as a *tourist town*. A *tourist town* is developed for tourists' entertainment without regard to the community's character and heritage. A *sustainable tourism destination* is a living part of the community including places where residents can live, work, shop and dine and reflects residents' pride in preserving their community's historic resources and cultural heritage. These same attributes will attract visitors to experience an authentic place. This is the goal for Guilford.

This section discusses a wide variety of infrastructure elements ranging from cultivating community involvement to enhancing recreational resources to opening new lodging facilities.

Strategy 4.1

Open bed and breakfast inns

Although attracting visitors for a day trip to take a walking tour, attend a festival or tour a local museum generates revenue, the greatest economic impact of tourism occurs when visitors stay overnight.

Guilford currently has fewer than 100 rooms within the town's boundaries. Zoning does allow for bed and breakfast inns but owners are required to live on site. As Guilford grows as a tourism destination, there will be more demand for lodging which could be met, in part, by encouraging the opening of bed and breakfast inns. Planning partners agreed that small B&Bs – two or three rooms – are most desirable, especially if they are located in residential neighborhoods. The addition of as few as five B&Bs can have an economic impact:

5 B&Bs – 3 rooms each = 15 rooms x 365 days = 5,475 room nights
Median national occupancy is 43% (2009 data) = 2,354 room nights
Average daily rate is \$150 x 2,354 nights =
\$353,100 in revenue annually



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

In addition, overnight guests will spend more on dining and are likely to spend more on attraction admissions and purchases of locally made products and souvenirs.

The characteristics of travelers who enjoy staying in B&Bs shows that they are a desirable travel segment and that their demographics match those of cultural heritage travelers. Studies find that B&Bs appeal to well educated, high income travelers who are drawn to historic buildings and unique accommodations.

Action Steps

- Investigate resource materials and training available through the Professional Innkeepers Association at www.innkeeping.org. (PIA).
- Send representatives to attend the next New England Innkeeping Conference and Trade Show.
- Promote the idea of B&Bs in Guilford and create a list of interested home and property owners
- Identify the best training opportunities to bring to Guilford for information sessions and workshops.
- Investigate changing regulations to no longer require owners to live on site at B&B.
- Investigate a lodging tax to generate revenue to support tourism programs and promotions.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Long-term	Town of Guilford ECD Chamber of Commerce	

Strategy 4.2 Recruit new downtown businesses to appeal to visitors

Guilford’s downtown offers a variety of retail stores and restaurants that can appeal to both tourists and residents. Having a downtown that is already economically successful and a community-supported strategic plan to increase tourism will make the Town Green appealing to potential business owners. A downtown business recruitment plan that carefully targets the types of businesses that are needed will help Guilford’s tourism growth. Among the ideas discussed in the planning phase were an antique shop, bike shop and outfitters, sports store, Made in Connecticut store, Farmers Market and a bed and breakfast. A strategy session with building owners will allow further exploration of the kinds of businesses that can be accommodated in available buildings and allow for discussions on how to recruit desired businesses.

Action Steps

Investigate assistance from Connecticut Main Street Center (<http://ctmainstreet.org/>), a nonprofit corporation that assists towns 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.



- Hold a strategy session with owners of downtown buildings. Review inventory of available retail and restaurant space.
- Identify types of businesses needed to appeal to visitors and develop a short-term recruitment plan.
- Track success and put in a place a long-term recruitment process.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term	Town of Guilford ECD	

Strategy 4.3 Develop resources to support outdoor recreation

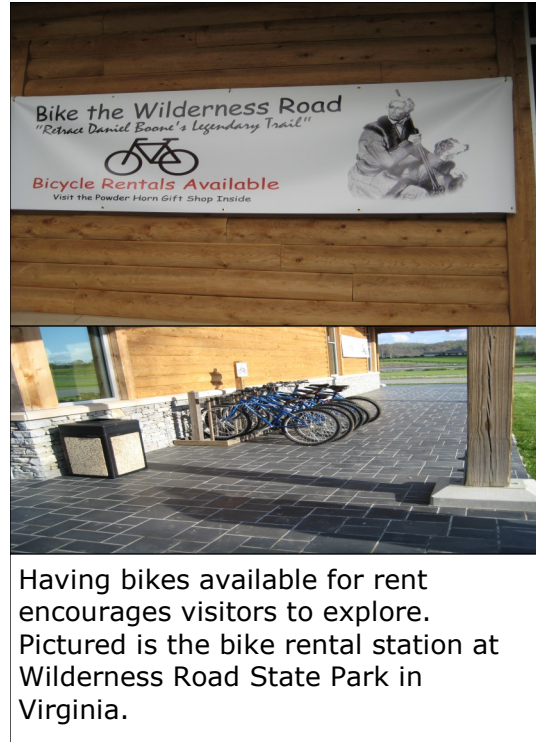
Hiking and biking are growing in popularity nationally. In 2008, the number of hikers grew by seven percent over the previous year. (*2009 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report*) In 2010, 43.3 million Americans six years and older enjoyed bicycling making it the fourth most popular outdoor activity in America. (*Outdoor Industry Association*)

Guilford’s trail system and greenway plans offer excellent options for attracting visitors to enjoy outdoor recreation including hiking and bicycling. Kayaking is a fast-growing outdoor sport with 7.8 million participants in 2009 (*Outdoor Foundation*). Guilford’s Department of Parks and Recreation is helping the town to capitalize on this interest by placing kayak racks along the shoreline.

The efforts of the Town of Guilford and several nonprofit groups will continue to develop an infrastructure to support these recreation activities which will attract more visitors to enjoy Guilford’s recreational activities.

Action Steps

- Place maps of biking and hiking trails and routes in locations where visitors look for information (Coordinate through Strategy 3.2 – brochure rack placement)
- As part of shoreline improvements, install 170 racks for kayaks.
- Install a boardwalk and information kiosk at Chittenden Park on the shoreline as part of the New England Scenic Trail.
- Install bicycle racks downtown and in other locations.
- Host bike safety events.
- Open a bike and kayak rental facility. (Coordinate with Strategy 4.2, downtown business recruitment)



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

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term - maps	Chamber of Commerce	Land Trust Shoreline Greenway Trail – Pam Simonds, Milton Charlton
Short-term – kayak racks	Dept. of Parks and Recreation	
Short-term – boardwalk and kiosk	National Scenic Hiking Committee	
Short-term – Bicycle racks	Shoreline Greenway Trail – Pam Simonds, Milton Charlton	
Short-term – Bike safety events	Shoreline Greenway Trail – Pam Simonds, Milton Charlton	
Long-term - Bike and kayak rental facility	EDC (part of business recruitment plan)	

Strategy 4.4 Publicize volunteer opportunities to increase community involvement

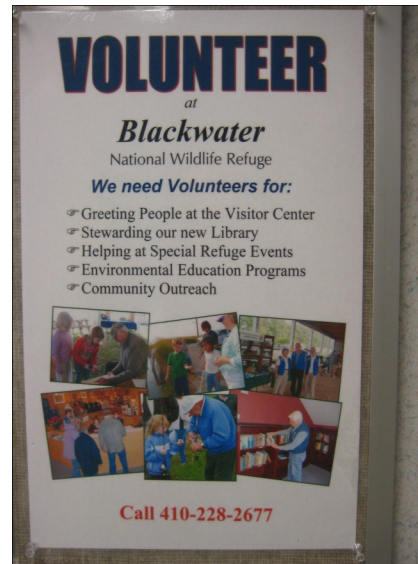
A successful heritage tourism plan depends on the support and involvement of Guilford's residents. Engaging residents in volunteer opportunities will cultivate community pride, generate local investment and make preservation of Guilford's historic resources and cultural heritage a priority.

The organizations in Guilford that manage cultural, historic and natural resources are nonprofits that depend on volunteers to achieve their mission. There are also many other nonprofits in Guilford which depend on volunteers to assist with social services, civic activities, youth programs, sports, education and other activities.

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. Creating a database of volunteer opportunities will help expand residents' knowledge of places to volunteer. By designing the database to give information on short-term and long-term volunteer activities, as well as skill levels required for various volunteer activities, potential volunteers can review all of the opportunities and can be matched to a volunteer activity where they will make a positive contribution.

Action Steps

- Apply for funding to hire a short-term assistant to research and create the database.
- Create an inventory of opportunities at heritage, cultural and outdoor sites as well as other volunteer opportunities in town. Include short and long-term activities.
- Create a volunteer opportunity database to include a listing of opportunities and contact information.
- Publicize the database through local media, social media and nonprofit organization newsletters.
- Update the database annually (or more often as needed) to maintain current information.



Volunteering creates opportunities for residents to contribute to their community and affiliate with others who have similar interests.

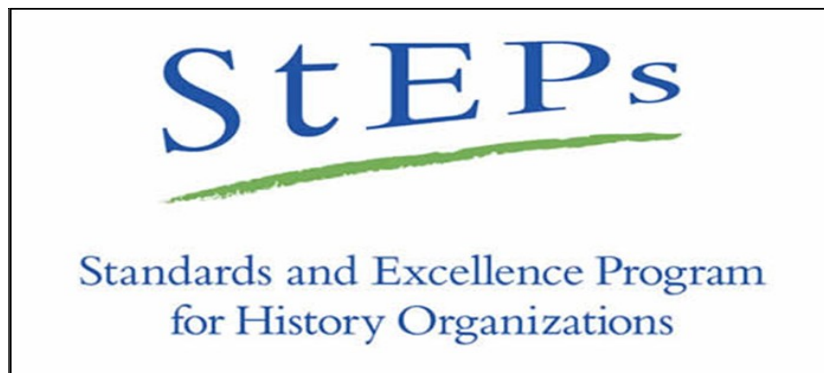
Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term – information on application for funding	Harry Haskell	
Short-term – create database	Short-term hire – who will oversee work????	
Long-term – maintain database	????	

Strategy 4.5 Create long-term plans to support historic house museums’ management and operations

Each of Guilford’s historic house museums has a dedicated group of staff, board members and volunteers who work to keep the sites open, preserve structures and collections, welcome visitors, plan and host special events and raise funds to continue this work. Site managers have worked together to identify specific actions that will strengthen the operation and management of their sites and enhance the sites’ appeal to visitors. Additional activities are described in other parts of this strategic plan including events and promotions.

Action Steps

- **STEPS-CT** – Site managers will participate in STEPS-CT (Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations) a program of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) offered at no charge by the Connecticut Humanities Council and Connecticut League of History Organizations. The program provides curriculum and a mentor to help history organizations evaluate and build stronger organizations. Site managers will request inclusion in the 2014-2015 class. (cthumanities.org)

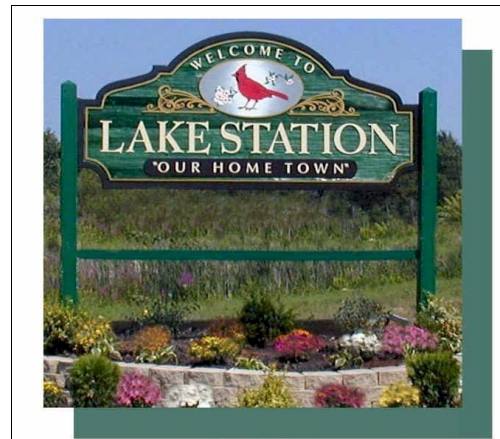


- **Collections Care** – All of the sites have irreplaceable collections that contribute to a compelling visitor experience. Site managers have identified two ways they will work to ensure the long-term care of their collections:
 - Site managers will share information on how they care for their collections including create a directory of resources each site uses to guide its collections care.
 - Sites will participate in the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) offered by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). The program includes a review of collections policies and procedures including collections care, acquisitions, legal, ethical and safety issues, inventory and emergency planning. (cthumanities.org)
- **Site Schedules** –As noted in Strategy 3.2, sites have a variety of operating hours, days and months. Strategy 3.2 addresses this in the short-term with plans to develop a brochure that communicates these schedules to visitors. As a longer-term strategy, site managers will work together to examine their operating schedules and to try to more closely align their operations, particularly hours and days. This will include identifying resources – budget, staffing and volunteers – to accomplish this goal.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Long-term – STEPS	Historic house museums	Connecticut Humanities Council
Short-term – share collections resources and information	Historic House museums	
Long-term – MAP	Historic house museums	American Alliance of Museums
Long-term – site schedules	Historic house museums	

Strategy 4.6 Develop a landscaping plan for gateways

Gateways are communities' welcome mats – their front doors. Gateways leading into Guilford are Highway 146 and Highway 77. Both are state designated Scenic Byways. Strategy 3.1 addresses plans for signage that will welcome visitors and direct them to attractions. A sense of arrival at a destination will be further enhanced with landscaping that complements the signage.



Signage and landscaping create a sense of arrival at a destination.

Action Steps

- Identify needs for landscaping and beautification at Guilford's gateways on Highway 146 and Highway 77.
- Coordinate plans for landscaping with plans for wayfinding signage (Strategy 3.1).
- Develop a maintenance plan.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term – landscaping plan		Town of Guilford
Long-term – implementation and maintenance		Town of Guilford

V. External Marketing

Traditional tourism marketing focuses on promotional venues such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television – both in news coverage and advertising. These outlets continue to be important, but they are now supplemented by the Internet and social media. This transformation has also resulted in shorter planning times before a trip and the expectation of tourists that information will be available whenever – and however – they want it.

Strategies throughout this plan reference promotion of activities and programs, in particular, strategies include references to on-site promotions such as placement of brochures and creation of an information kiosk that will allow visitors to learn about Guilford after they arrive in town.

This section identifies external strategies – ways to reach visitors to encourage them to come to Guilford. The original plan called for developing a marketing plan by applying to the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism for a marketing challenge grant. Unfortunately, the grant program will not be offered in the 2013-2014 fiscal year due to state government budget constraints. There are still opportunities for Guilford to partner with the state tourism office on selected marketing strategies. Those opportunities are reflected in this section along with additional marketing strategies involving other partners.

Strategies are included in this section with the intent to create promotions that are low or no-cost, although all will require an investment of time from partners to develop and implement the strategies. Tracking success through website visits, use of discount coupons, increased visitation at attractions and other methods will enable partners to determine which promotions are most successful.

Strategy 5.1 Conduct audience research to identify target audiences

Understanding who is currently visiting Guilford will help attract repeat visitation, identify new audiences and provide insights on where to target promotions to reach the desired demographic. Guilford's historic house museums will be the start of this data collection process and analysis. Site managers agreed they would all benefit – as well as Guilford's heritage tourism program – by sharing information on how they currently collect data and developing a uniform set of information that they will all collect. Information can also be gathered through the walking tours and arts events that will be useful in creating a visitor profile.

Visitor research data available from the Connecticut Office of Tourism and Culture can also provide insights into who is visiting the state that can help in identifying new audiences.

Action Steps

- Historic house museum managers will share information on how each collects visitor data and what information they currently have on their site’s visitors.
- Site managers will develop a uniform set of data that all will collect (including demographic data as well as information on what visitors are planning to see and do in Guilford).
- Walking tour guides will collect similar data from visitors who are taking the tour (only collected from out-of-town visitors).
- Data from the state office of tourism will be collected as part of the Connecticut Humanities grant project (Strategy 1.2) pending the grant’s award (April 2013).
- Partners will compile all information and create a profile of visitors – actual and targeted – to Guilford.
- Data will continue to be collected on a regular basis (every 2-3 years).

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term	Historic House Museums	GPA – walking tour CT Office of Tourism

Strategy 5.2 Develop a web-based master calendar of activities and events

Currently, information on activities and events can be found in two locations – the Chamber of Commerce website (guilfordct.com) which lists community and chamber events, and the Town of Guilford’s website (ci.guilford.ct.us). Both are presented in a monthly calendar format and do not differentiate between community-oriented activities and activities that would appeal to tourists.

Arts events can be found on the Shoreline Arts Alliance website (shorelinearts.org). The Guilford Green Merchants Association posts information at guilfordgreentct.com about activities on the Green. Activity information can also be found on the websites of individual attractions, restaurants and retail stores.

To make it easy for visitors to learn about all that is happening in Guilford, partners plan to create a master calendar of events and activities. The calendar will focus on activities that will appeal to tourists and will be promoted with links on partner websites and inclusion in all promotional materials.

Action Steps

- Research options for calendar development – format, submitting entries, cost to build and maintain website, etc.
- Develop specifications for website and seek funding.
- Determine partner(s) who will be responsible for overseeing website.
- Publicize to all attractions in Guilford to submit events and activities (subject to approval).
- Monitor visits to website and effectiveness at increasing attendance at events.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term – investigate costs, development options	Eric Dillner – Shoreline Arts Alliance	
Long-term – develop and maintain site		

Strategy 5.3 Promote Guilford attractions on Connecticut Out and About website

Connecticut Out and About (ctoutandabout.com) is a new website developed by Guilford resident Ed Bartlett to promote attractions and activities across the state. The website features a user friendly format with sections including attractions, arts and theater, fairs and carnivals, farm markets, festivals, parks, music, museums, restaurants, events and a “This Weekend” section. In addition to listings, there are well written feature stories posted on a regular basis.

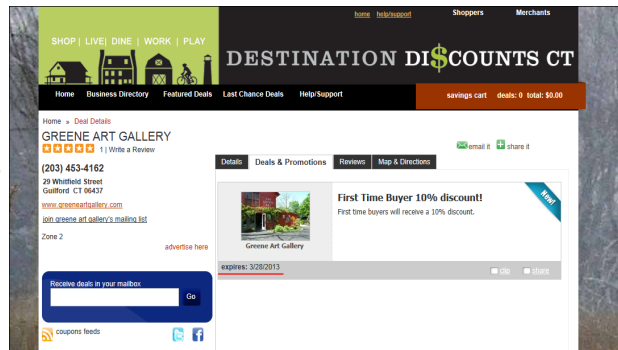
Action Step

- Inform all partners of the opportunity to place information on the website. Provide contact information.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term		

Strategy 5.4 Participate in destinationdiscountsct.com

The Guilford Chamber of Commerce’s tourism committee has recently begun participating in the website destinationdiscountsct.com which promotes attractions and events. There is no cost for nonprofit chamber members to participate. Chamber business members’ charge is \$150.00 for one year. Non-chamber members can participate for a \$330 annual fee. Participation includes a merchant page with logo, company description and coupons, inclusion in the business directory and access by smart phones.



Action Steps

- Inform all partners of the opportunity to place information on the website. Provide contact information.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term	Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee	

Strategy 5.5 Create a database to promote walking tours

The success of the walking tour program in its first year confirms the interest of residents and visitors in Guilford’s history. The next step to increase interest (and ticket sales) is to reach a wider audience to let them know about the tours.

Action Steps

- Develop a list of special interest groups who would be interested in history-themed tours.
- Research websites and social media to build a database of groups.
- Create electronic brochure to promote the walking tours and send to targeted groups.
- Use database to promote other history-themed activities (such as the historic house museums’ progressive dinner).

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term	Dennis Culliton	National Trails

Strategy 5.6 Develop suggested themed itineraries

In recent years, themed itineraries have become popular with visitors. Itineraries should inform visitors about all the places they can experience related to their interests such as history (or a particular historical era), the arts, outdoor recreation or other activities. Developing suggested itineraries will showcase Guilford in different ways to appeal to multiple interests.

Action Steps

- Consider types of tours such as topography, arts, holidays, hiking, walking, segway, bike tours or sailing.
- Develop suggested itineraries for half-day, one-day or two-days. Include suggestions for dining and shopping in addition to touring.
- Post itineraries on websites including historicguilford.org, CToutandabout.com and CTvisit.com (the state’s tourism website).

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term	Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee	

Strategy 5.7 Create tour packages

Travel planning has experienced significant changes in recent years including the increased use of technology resulting in short planning times and the search for travel bargains due to economic difficulties. A step beyond offering itineraries is creating packages that make it easy for visitors to plan or purchase their trip and offering economic incentives.

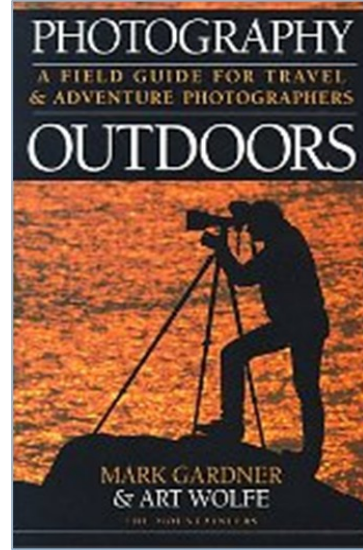
Action Steps

- Bundle travel products to create packages (museums, tours, restaurants, lodging) that can be promoted by the Connecticut Office of Tourism and other tourism agencies.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term		

Strategy 5.8 Promote a photography tour

Guilford’s scenic beauty, interesting historical architecture and numerous events provide an ideal setting to attract photographers. Giving photographers a glimpse of Guilford’s photographic opportunities will attract this niche market to town.



Action Steps

- Develop a photography tour – identify locations and create a guide offering suggestions for historic buildings, scenery, festivals, artisans and other photography opportunities in and around Guilford.
- Promote photo opportunities through photography clubs.
- Set up a Flickr™ site and invite photographers to post pictures.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term	Ellen Ebert and Edie Brown will look for a project lead	

Strategy 5.9 Promote Guilford through Connecticut Office of Culture and Tourism programs

The Connecticut Office of Culture and Tourism offers many promotions that are low or no-cost. By participating in these promotions, Guilford will reach tourists who are clearly interested in visiting Connecticut with messages about all there is to see and do in Guilford.

Action Steps

- **Place brochures in welcome centers** – Of the five staffed state welcome centers, the closest locations to Guilford are Westbrook and Fairfield (both are on I-95). Brochures can be placed at no charge with prior approval from the tourism office.
- **Provide information for *Connecticut Getaway Guide*** -The guide is a magazine style publication which features tourism attractions, accommodations and services. The guide is printed twice a year (total of 1.5 million copies).
- **Post information on state tourism website** – The state tourism office’s website, ctvisit.com, received more than 2 million visits annually and allows information on attractions, events and travel packages to be posted at no charge.
- **Distribute news through public relations division** – Send press releases, package promotions and other information to the public relations division to be shared with the travel industry news media.
- **Promote through E-Newsletter** – The tourism e-newsletter for consumers is distributed monthly to more than 500,000 opt-in subscribers. Travel specials, overnight packages, discounts and events can be included.

Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
Short-term		

Strategy Summaries: Timeline, Project Lead, Partners

Section I: The Visitor Experience: Sharing Guilford's Story and Sense of Place			
Strategy	Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
1.1 Historic walking tours	Ongoing	GPA Dennis Culliton	
1.2 Interpretive signage	Short-term Town signs – planning and implementation Short-term – Greenway signs planning Long-term – Greenway signs implementation	GPA Shirley Girioni Rob Vavasour Shoreline Greenway Trail Pam Simonds Milton Charlton	History Experts Committee – Dennis Culliton, Joel Helander, Carl Balestracci
1.3 Information kiosk	Short-term – planning and implementation	GPA Shirley Girioni Rob Vavasour	Town of Guilford
1.4 Tour opportunities	Short-term – photography tour, bus tour Long-term – audio tours, heritage trails	Ellen Ebert (look for lead) Girl Scouts (bus tour) GPA	Guilford Keeping Society, Dudley Farm, First Congregational Church, Joel Helander, Carl Balestracci
1.5 400 Years of History	Short-term	Mike McBride, Pat Lovelace, Veronica Soell	Janet Dudley Town of Guilford - ECD
1.6 Children's programs at house museums	Long-term	Mike McBride, Pat Lovelace, Veronica Soell, Janet Dudley	
1.7 Art exhibits	Short-term	Maureen Belden	Edie Brown
1.8 Share Guilford's story	Short-term	Edie Brown	

Section II: Events: Bring Guilford's History and Culture to Life

Strategy	Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
2.1 Doors Open Month	Long-term	GPA	Historic house museums, Chamber tourism committee, Land Conservation Trust, Town ECD
2.2 Early Guilford Days	Short-term	Historic house museums	
2.3 Progressive Dinner	Short-term	Historic house museums	Local restaurants, Town ECD
2.4 Chautauqua	Long-term	Kathryn Greene – Guilford Green Merchants, Maureen Belden – Guilford Arts Center, Ellie Green – GPA	Guilford Library Historic house museums
2.5 Poetry Festival	Short-term	Kathryn Greene – Guilford Green Merchants, Guilford Poetry Guild	Shoreline Arts Alliance
2.6 Raking of the Green	Short-term		

Section III: Visitor Services: Welcoming Visitors to Guilford

Strategy	Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
3.1 Wayfinding signage	Short-term	Town of Guilford – ECD	Guilford Green Merchants
3.2 Collateral materials	Short-term – tear off maps Short-term – house museum brochure Short-term brochure racks	<i>Need a lead</i> Pat Lovelace, Veronica Soell, Mike McBride Town of Guilford - ECD	Town of Guilford ECD
3.3 Ambassador hospitality program	Short-term – research Long-term – front-line training Long-term – community training	Janet Testa – chamber Town of Guilford, chamber tourism committee	Guilford Green Merchants, GPA
3.4 Souvenir products	Short-term – research Long-term – product development and sales	Ellen Ebert	375 th anniversary committee
3.5 Shuttle service	Short-term	Town of Guilford – Parks and Recreation, ECD	Historic house museums
3.6 Train station feasibility study	Long-term	Town of Guilford, GPA	AMTRAK

Section IV. Infrastructure: Build the Destination

Strategy	Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
4.1 Bed and breakfast inns	Long-term	Town of Guilford ECD Chamber of Commerce	
4.2 New downtown businesses	Short-term	Town of Guilford ECD	
4.3 Outdoor recreation resources	Short-term – maps Short-term – kayak racks Short-term – boardwalk and kiosk Short-term – bike racks Short-term – safety events Long-term – bike and kayak rental facility	Chamber of Commerce Dept. of Parks & Rec National Scenic Hiking Committee Shoreline Greenway Trail – Pam Simonds, Milton Charlton EDC (part of business recruitment plan)	Land Trust
4.4 Volunteer opportunities	Short-term – apply for funding Short-term – database Long-term - maintenance	Harry Haskell Hire short-term <i>Need a lead</i>	
4.5 Plans for house museums	Long-term – STEPS Short-term – collections resources Long-term - MAP Long-term – site schedules	Historic house museums	Connecticut Humanities Council American Alliance of Museums
4.6 Gateway landscape plan	Short-term – plan Long-term – implement and maintain		Town of Guilford

Section V. External Marketing

Strategy	Timeline	Project Lead	Partners
5.1 Audience research	Short-term	Historic house museums	GPA – walking tour, CT Office of Tourism
5.2 Web-based master calendar	Short-term – research and plan Long-term – develop and maintain	Eric Dillner – Shoreline Arts Alliance <i>Need lead</i>	
5.3 Connecticut Out and About	Short-term	<i>Need lead</i>	
5.4 Destination discount	Short-term	Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee	
5.5 Database to promote walking tours	Short-term	Dennis Culliton	National Trails
5.6 Themed itineraries	Short-term	Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee	
5.7 Tour packages	Short-term	<i>Need lead</i>	
5.8 Photography tour	Short-term	<i>Ellen Ebert and Edie Brown to look for project lead</i>	
5.9 CT Office of Tourism promotions	Short-term	<i>Need lead</i>	

Strategy Costs and Funding Sources

To be completed as projects develop.

Each project will ultimately have its own budget.

These charts allow overall tracking of expenditures and funding sources.

Section I: The Visitor Experience: Sharing Guilford's Story and Sense of Place		
Strategy	Costs	Funding Sources
1.1 Historic walking tours		
1.2 Interpretive signage		
1.3 Information kiosk		
1.4 Tour opportunities		
1.5 400 Years of History		
1.6 Children's programs at house museums		
1.7 Art exhibits		
1.8 Share Guilford's story		

Section II: Events: Bring Guilford's History and Culture to Life

Strategy	Costs	Funding Sources
2.1 Doors Open Month		
2.2 Early Guilford Days		
2.3 Progressive Dinner		
2.4 Guilford Chautauqua		
2.5 Poetry Festival		
2.6 Raking of the Green		

Section III: Visitor Services: Welcoming Visitors to Guilford

Strategy	Costs	Funding Sources
3.1 Wayfinding signage		
3.2 Collateral materials		
3.3 Ambassador hospitality program		
3.4 Souvenir products		
3.5 Shuttle service for events		
3.6 Train station feasibility study		

Section IV: Infrastructure: Build the Destination

Strategy	Costs	Funding Sources
4.1 Bed and breakfast inns		
4.2 New downtown business recruitment		
4.3 Support outdoor recreation		
4.4 Volunteer opportunities		
4.5 Long-term plans for house museums		
4.6 Landscaping for gateways		

Section V: External Marketing

Strategy	Costs	Funding Sources
5.1 Audience research		
5.2 Web-based master calendar		
5.3 Connecticut Out and About		
5.4 Destinationdiscountct		
5.5 Database to promote walking tours		
5.6 Themed itineraries		
5.7 Tour packages		
5.8 Photography tour		
5.9 CT Office of Tourism promotions		