

New Jersey Heritage Tourism Plan Stakeholders meeting report

Overview

Members of the consulting team conducted four stakeholders meetings - on September 16 in Morristown and Burlington and on September 17 in Trenton and Atlantic City. The objectives of the meetings were:

- to inform the participants about the plan's recommendations
- to receive feedback on the specific draft recommendations
- to deliver a call to action for the plan's ultimate implementation.

The Task Force did a wonderful job in procuring great sites for the meetings and for managing and promoting attendance. The Morristown meeting had 30 participants, Burlington 26, Trenton 24, and Atlantic City 15. Participants represented many aspects of New Jersey's heritage tourism including Destination Marketing Organizations, historic sites, tourism offices and others.

Meeting agendas are attached. Meetings followed a similar format with introductions, a presentation which included an overview of the plan's guiding principles, review of the recommendations, feedback exercise, a discussion of potential interpretive themes, a call to action and a review of next steps in the planning process. The participants were also informed that the Task Force would be in contact with them again in the future to query more directly about their potential roles in the plan's implementation.

Feedback on Recommendations

Following a presentation on the Heritage Tourism Plan's recommendations, an exercise was conducted to gather feedback from participants. Each recommendation was printed on a legal sized sheet of paper and grouped on a table with the other recommendations for a particular strategy. Each participant was given two green dot stickers for each of the three strategies and was told to vote for the two top recommendations under each strategy. Participants were allowed to double vote (use both stickers for a single recommendation under a strategy) if they believed a specific recommendation was especially important. A blank sheet was provided at each meeting for participants to post recommendations that were not included, but should be considered. Given the figures in the discussions that follow it is clear that not all voted nor used both their votes in the exercise.

The strategies and recommendations votes on are as follows:

Strategy One:

Identify heritage resources and develop products and infrastructure to support heritage tourism.

Recommendation A: Provide guidance and technical assistance to ensure heritage sites are managed and sustained.

Recommendation B: Develop criteria to identify visitor ready heritage sites in the database of New Jersey heritage resources.

Recommendation C: Support implementation of New Jersey’s Wayfinding Master Plan.

Recommendation D: Develop a statewide marker program that complements the themes and wayfinding signage.

Strategy Two:

Implement outreach to historic sites to build a strong advocacy and marketing network that increases recognition, visitation and investment.

Recommendation A: Build a strong network of historic sites through increased and consistent communication with managers, staff, volunteers, boards.

Recommendation B: Implement plans to increase local engagement and build community pride.

Recommendation C: Increase communications with state, county, and municipal agencies to generate support for heritage tourism.

Recommendation D: Market to attract new and repeat New Jersey travelers.

Recommendation E: Increase revenues generated from sales of Discover NJ license plates.

Strategy Three:

Develop a management and partnership system that will support the development of the New Jersey Heritage Tourism Program.

Recommendation A: Collaborate to expand and leverage resources for the New Jersey Heritage Tourism Program.

Recommendation B: Create and manage a New Jersey grant program.

Recommendation C: Adopt funding strategies to support New Jersey heritage sites.

Recommendation D: Implement a performance evaluation system.

Recommendation E: Create advocacy pieces to reach target audiences.

The raw voting numbers are included on a chart that follows. More informative are those numbers expressed as a percentage of the votes cast. A separate working spreadsheet provides a breakdown for each meeting with the numbers of votes cast and those votes expressed as a percentage of those cast for each recommendation. A final column averages the percentages. According to those calculations (rounded off) the highest priorities throughout all four meetings expressed as **an average of percentages from across all meetings** are as follows

- 52 Provide guidance and technical assistance to ensure heritage sites are managed and sustained. (1.A)
- 42 Adopt funding strategies to support New Jersey heritage sites (3.C)
- 27 Develop criteria to identify visitor ready heritage sites in the database of New Jersey heritage resources.(1.B)
- 27 Build a strong network of historic sites through increased and consistent communication with managers, staff, volunteers, boards. (2.A)
- 25 Implement plans to increase local engagement and build community pride. (2.B)
- 25 Market to attract new and repeat New Jersey travelers. (2.D)

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- 25 Collaborate to expand and leverage resources for the New Jersey Heritage Tourism Program. (3.A)
- 18 Increase communications with state, county, and municipal agencies to generate support for heritage tourism. (2.C)
- 14 Support implementation of New Jersey's Wayfinding Master Plan.
- 13 Create and manage a New Jersey grant program.
- 12 Implement a performance evaluation system. (3.D)
- 12 Develop a statewide marker program that complements the themes and wayfinding signage.
- 6 Create advocacy pieces to reach target audiences. (3.E)
- 3 Increase revenues generated from sales of Discover NJ license plates.(2.E)

The greatest variances from meeting to meeting were for:

Recommendation 1A - Provide guidance and technical assistance to ensure heritage sites are managed and sustained.

This had totals of 44, 73, 51 and 37 percent.

Recommendation 2A - Build a strong network of historic sites through increased and consistent communication with managers, staff, volunteers, boards.

This had totals of 31, 41, 25 and 11 percent.

Additional stakeholder comments on recommendations

In addition to providing feedback on the proposed strategies and recommendations, stakeholders provided additional insights into elements they feel are important to include in heritage tourism development. Following is a summary of key comments from stakeholders.

1. Increased use of technology is essential to successful heritage tourism development.

A major topic related to many recommendations was the need to engage technology to further heritage tourism aims. From list serves and podcasts to GPS and websites it was agreed that New Jersey's heritage tourism efforts must use technology to make operations more efficient, to reach out to a younger generation, and to enhance and leverage existing efforts and programs.

2. Ensure smaller sites are included in heritage tourism plans and development

Participants at both the Morristown and Trenton meeting wanted to make sure that smaller sites got assistance and guidance and that they did not get lost in the shuffle. What sort of help could bring these smaller sites to the next level?

3. Partnerships are needed for success in heritage tourism.

There were discussions at each of the four meetings about the need for cooperation that ranged from using existing training programs offered by state and national organizations, partnering with other heritage sites to create packages for school tours and looking at non traditional partners for packaging

and marketing. Working with the arts community was also mentioned at each of the meetings. The County Cultural and Heritage Commissions were mentioned as a potential partner however it was noted that they range in effectiveness and some may need to build capacity in order to be strong partners. As not every county has a commission they cannot represent the state as a whole. Partnerships with schools, universities and the state Department of Education were encouraged.

4. A state program should define “tourism ready” and “authenticity.”

Participants expressed a desire to have a good definition of “tourism ready” that could be widely disseminated and perhaps used in granting priorities. They also expressed a desire to set a standard for “authenticity.”

5. An organizational structure must be developed to implement the plan.

There was concern about a need for structure—some sort of vehicle or organization to implement the plan and review its effectiveness. There was also concern about how heritage tourism is fragmented and divided into several state agency portfolios.

6. Marketing issues need to be addressed.

Participants advocated cooperating regionally and even across state lines in marketing efforts.

7. Need for dedicated funding and measurement.

The hotel/motel tax and its administration was a topic of discussion, and there was general agreement that the commitment level and annual funds disbursement from these revenues needs to be revisited. Having a way to demonstrate return on investment (ROI) was widely recommended, especially by elected officials attending the Burlington City and Atlantic City meetings.

New Jersey Historical Themes

The consultant team also used the stakeholders’ meetings to introduce themes for New Jersey heritage tourism. Themes that have been approved by the Task Force are:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Military | <i>New Jersey at War</i> |
| 2. Industrial | <i>New Jersey at Work</i> |
| 3. Agricultural/Maritime | <i>New Jersey Land and Sea</i> |
| 4. Ethnic | <i>Many Faces of New Jersey</i> |
| 5. Recreational | <i>New Jersey at Play</i> |

The consultant team asked for feedback on the themes and also asked each participant to select which theme pertained to them. If many themes were applicable they were asked to choose one. A chart showing voting results is attached.

Thirteen sites identified as Military; eight as Industrial; nine as Agricultural/Maritime; five as Ethnic; and

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six as Recreational. Twenty-one identified as other with a large number of those selecting architecture/design/decorative arts or transportation as a theme.

Notes on the session are included with this report and provide a comprehensive look at stakeholders' comments. Key comments included:

- Some participants objected to the characterization of New Jersey at War—preferring patriotism or conflict.
- There were suggestions to add architecture/design and transportation to the list of themes.
- There was also some discussion of landscape architecture and gardening, referencing the “Garden State” motto.
- There was a small but well considered argument about how the arts fit in to the themes.
- Interestingly one participant in Atlantic City suggested that the state’s long history with organized crime be a “sopranos” theme.

Call to Action

The purpose of this section of the meetings was to remind stakeholders that the Heritage Tourism Task Force is slated to be dissolved upon completion of the plan and that implementation will need to be embraced by the stakeholders throughout the state. As the plan moves forward, participants will be contacted by the Task Force to ascertain how they might be involved.

One participant at the Burlington City meeting mentioned reviving the now defunct Tourism Advisory Committee which included many powerful and prominent persons who used their influence to move projects forward. At all the stakeholder meetings, two potential partners were identified: educational institutions and Advocates for New Jersey History. Other partners include: County governments, the New Jersey Living History Council. New Jersey Association of Museums, the New Jersey Travel Industry Association, New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry, County Cultural and Heritage Commissions, National Association for Interpretation, Chambers of Commerce, National Park Service and American Association for State and Local History.

Individual participants at the stakeholder meetings responded to the call to action by sharing how their organizations and agencies could be involved, specifically:

- a) Crossroads of the American Revolution Heritage Area could disseminate information about the toolkit to its members,
- b) the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail may have good statistics for performance evaluation,
- c) New Jersey DOT could redesign the map so the map key is not situated in a portion of the map visitors from Pennsylvania would use,
- d) the New Jersey Historical Commission could play a part in funding and training.

Other participants will be asked to articulate how their organization, agency, business or members can champion and help implement this plan in the follow-up e-mail distributed with this recap report.

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New Jersey Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan

Stakeholders Meeting Agenda

September 16, 2009

Morristown Club

Morristown, New Jersey

10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Welcome and introductions

Leslie Bensley, Executive Director
Morristown Tourism Bureau

Meeting overview

Cheryl Hargrove, Hargrove International, Inc.
Meeting facilitator

Participant introductions

Presentation:

- Introduction to heritage tourism principles
- Overview of legislation to create a New Jersey Heritage Tourism Plan
- New Jersey Heritage Tourism Plan strategies and recommendations

Participant Exercise

- Assessment of strategies and recommendations
- Prioritization of strategies and recommendations
- Review of New Jersey heritage tourism themes

Group discussion of strategies and recommendations

Call to Action:

How can your organization promote and participate in the plan?

Next Steps

- How participants' recommendations will contribute to the plan
- Project schedule

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Stakeholders Meeting Agenda

September 16, 2009

The Lyceum (Old City Hall)

Burlington, New Jersey

6:00 P.M. – 9 P.M.

Welcome and introductions

John Seitter, President
South Jersey Tourism Corp.

Meeting overview

Mary Ruffin Hanbury, Hanbury Preservation Consulting,
Meeting facilitator

Participant introductions

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Historic Site Stewards Meeting Agenda

September 17, 2009

Masonic Hall

Trenton, New Jersey

10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Welcome and introductions

Cate Litvack, Executive Director,
Crossroads of the American Revolution Association

Meeting overview

Mary Ruffin Hanbury, Hanbury Preservation Consulting,
Meeting facilitator

Participant introductions

Presentation:

- Introduction to heritage tourism principles
- Overview of legislation to create a New Jersey Heritage Tourism Plan
- New Jersey Heritage Tourism Plan strategies and recommendations

Participant Exercise

- Assessment of strategies and recommendations
- Prioritization of strategies and recommendations
- Review of New Jersey heritage tourism themes

Group discussion

- Strategies and recommendations
- Building and engaging a statewide network of heritage attractions

Call to Action:

How can your organization promote and participate in the plan?

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Stakeholders Meeting Agenda

Thursday, September 17

Carnegie Library Center

Atlantic City, New Jersey

6:00 P.M.– 9:00 P.M.

Welcome and introductions

Dorothy Guzzo, Executive Director,
New Jersey Historic Trust

Meeting overview

Cheryl Hargrove, Hargrove International, Inc.
Meeting facilitator

Participant introductions

Presentation:

- Introduction to heritage tourism principles
- Overview of legislation to create a New Jersey Heritage Tourism Plan
- New Jersey Heritage Tourism Plan strategies and recommendations

Participant Exercise

- Assessment of strategies and recommendations
- Prioritization of strategies and recommendations
- Review of New Jersey heritage tourism themes

Group discussion of strategies and recommendations

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