



Chapter Three *A Strategy for Heritage Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Maryland already enjoys a healthy level of tourism, and the state has been told by its visitors that visiting historic sites ranks among the top three activities they enjoy in Maryland. As Americans begin to spend more of their leisure time and dollars in travel, they are looking for something different a more active experience, one that combines recreation, adventure, learning and a “real place.” This is true both for Americans and for international visitors who are beginning to seek out the “real” America to visit. Both “eco-tourism,” tourism focusing on natural features and environments, and “heritage tourism,” tourism focusing on cultural and historic features and sites, are on the rise as the result of these changing tastes. These two types of tourism can be combined in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA).

The data on heritage tourists is impressive. According to a 1998 survey by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIAA), more than 65 million Americans visited a historic site, museum, festival or other cultural event while traveling in 1997. Spending by this group, \$615 per trip, was higher, on average, than that of all domestic travelers, \$425 per trip. According to the TIAA’s analysis, “these travelers are more likely than others to take longer trips [average of 5.2 nights], include multiple destinations on trips, participate in more activities while traveling and stay in hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts while traveling.”¹ According to data assembled by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA), these visitors also tend to have higher incomes, higher education levels, and more interest in shopping. Nationally, visiting historic sites is the second favorite activity of all tourists, and out-of-state

¹ Travel Industry Association of America, “Profile of Travelers Who Participate in Historic and Cultural Activities.” *Tourism Works for America*, 1998 Report, p. 24.

visitors to Maryland cite heritage tourism as the second-highest reason for visiting the state.

Another trend in tourism is also apparent, one that should work in favor of ATHA: fewer people are taking the traditional long vacation and instead are taking shorter trips closer to home. In a large metropolitan region such as the Washington, D.C., area, ATHA has a chance to draw many “day-trippers.” Although they may not spend as much as overnight visitors (who must pay for lodging and more meals), they can provide much benefit to heritage sites, local retailers and restaurants. Indeed, as research cited below shows, heritage sites within the Washington, D.C., region, well beyond the monumental core, tend to serve day visitors more than overnight ones.

ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE ANACOSTIA TRAILS HERITAGE AREA TO HERITAGE TOURISTS

ATHA is within the Washington, D.C., area, a popular destination for many American families and international visitors and home to 1.6 million households. This means that the Heritage Area has an excellent opportunity to become part of the many long vacations still spent in the nation’s capital and can capitalize on the trend toward shorter, close-to-home getaways. This area offers a convenient, family-oriented, less expensive destination for these visitors.

Persuaded to stay in ATHA for these reasons, out-of-town visitors often choose to take a break for a day or two from their intensive “downtown” experience. For such visitors, ATHA offers a chance to visit lesser-known, but no less intriguing, historic sites, or to bicycle along one of the state’s premier greenways, or to drive along a route that allows them to learn about, for example, science and the environment. In addition to the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum in Washington, why not take in the authentic site where the Wright brothers first trained military officers in flight? Or take a look at the lab that supports the Hubble space telescope? Or join a tour of the Anacostia Watershed Society to study the river? Or take in the sight of waterfowl by the thousands on the lake behind National Wildlife Visitor Center?

In addition, in Prince George’s County, the establishment of the nationally known Six Flags America, the new Redskins’ football stadium (FedEx Field) and the proposed National Harbor development are drawing positive attention to the county as a place to spend leisure time. The University of Maryland’s position as a site for numerous conferences and athletic and performing arts events a number of them international in reputation adds to that mix. A package of heritage tourism opportunities may appeal to many of those who know the area through these individual offerings.

Thanks especially to a number of high-quality, well-attended heritage sites in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, the county is positioned to



The Visitor Center at Goddard Space Flight Center has many interactive exhibits highlighting NASA milestones in space exploration.

begin a strategic appeal to its existing market. Greenbelt National Park sees more than 330,000 visitors each year, the National Wildlife Visitor Center and the NASA Visitor Center each attract approximately 65,000 people every year. The new College Park Aviation Museum is projected to have an annual visitation of 90,000 people. Adding other sites that may be less well attended—Montpelier Mansion, Riversdale, the Greenbelt Museum, the Laurel Museum, and the Anacostia Tributary Trails System—suggests that over half a million visitors are already the foundation of the Heritage Area’s tourism market. This does not count the 100,000 visitors who enjoy Laurel’s annual Main Street festival, visitors to the Patuxent Research Refuge who do not register at the visitor center, or those participating in many other smaller events sponsored by communities, institutions and groups throughout the area, or those attending sports and performing arts events at The University of Maryland.

Heritage Tourism Events and Attractions

Tourism related to or potentially related to ATHA includes attendance at events and visits to existing heritage attractions. In ATHA there are numerous performing arts sites, regular programming at interpretive and cultural institutions, and specific celebrations organized by sponsors who may create only one or two per year, such as house tours, festivals, parades and popular recreational events.

There are seven major performing arts sites in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, with another under construction. These include the Pugliese Theater; the Tawes Fine Arts Center and Theatre, the Ulrich Recital Hall, and Memorial Chapel at The University of Maryland; the Publick Playhouse; the Montpelier Cultural Arts Center on the grounds of Montpelier Mansion; the Greenbelt Cultural Arts Center; and the

Clarice Smith Center for the Performing Arts on The University of Maryland campus. Of special note is The University of Maryland's international piano and vocal arts competitions.

The "anchor" heritage attractions all offer special events and exhibits. Montpelier Mansion and Riversdale have both had success with afternoon teas. Riversdale is the site of a War of 1812 encampment and enactment on the anniversary of the Battle of Bladensburg (August) and recently drew visitors to a costume workshop. Although neither site is open every day, both have calendars full of programs, including lectures, films and other special events such as Montpelier Mansion's summer concert series. The Greenbelt Museum features one special exhibit every other year; the most recent exhibit featured decorative arts of the 1930s.

The Laurel Museum mounts at least one special exhibit every year. Additionally, the Laurel Board of Trade sponsors a farmer's market every Thursday throughout the summer. The National Archives II facility offers lectures and conferences, and The University of Maryland mounts a major competition, National History Day. Both the College Park Aviation Museum and the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center feature special programming, including the annual Goddard Model Rocket Contest and the Aviation Museum's Air Mail Day in August. The Beltsville Agricultural Research Center holds a Public Field Day each year in June.



The Port Towns regatta at the Bladensburg waterfront.

A sampling of public festivals includes Mount Rainier Day (April); Laurel's Main Street Festival (May) and its Fourth of July parade; Greenbelt's Labor Day Celebration; Hyattsville's Anniversary Celebration (May), Historic Hyattsville House Tour (May), and International Festival (September). There are also the Port Towns' kite festival

(September), Port Towns Day (September); the Festival Hispano in Adelphi (September), and North Brentwood Day (June). Various other events coincide with holidays (e.g., Fourth of July fireworks) and Black History Month.

Recreational events and environmental education opportunities include the College Park Area Bicycle Coalition's "Maryland 500" in April and October, with a segment of this bike ride along the Anacostia Tributary Trails System, and canoe tours of Lake Artemesia. Both the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) and M-NCPPC offer boat tours of the Anacostia River, and AWS offers kayaking on the river along with flatwater canoeing and kayaking competitions. The National Wildlife Visitor Center celebrates International Migratory Bird Day (May), National Fishing Week (June) and National Wildlife Refuge Week (October). Greenbelt Park sponsors bicycle races, drawing competitors from the wider region, and the Washington's Birthday road race at Beltsville Agricultural Research Center attracts participants from across the nation. There are also numerous sporting events at The University of Maryland. Some recreational events are held at the municipal level; for example, Hyattsville sponsors a five-mile run.

Visitor Amenities

Visitor amenities in ATHA include over 20 hotels and motels with more than 2,500 rooms; approximately 200 restaurants (not counting fast food, takeout or coffee shops); more than 50 shopping centers from small to large (with 13 having more than 100,000 square feet of leasable floor space); and a number of movie theaters. The Old Greenbelt Theater is the last remaining single, large-screen theater in the county. There are two campgrounds in the Heritage Area, at Greenbelt National Park and the for-profit Cherry Hill Park, and numerous sites for conferences, meetings, reunions or weddings, including four historic sites (Montpelier Mansion, Snow Hill, Riversdale and Adelphi Mill).

Prince George's County will benefit by investigating ways to encourage "bed and breakfast" lodging. The number of potential accommodations could be quite high if, in addition to the bed and breakfasts Americans are coming to expect, smaller and more modest accommodations are also encouraged; e.g., one or two bedrooms in a home, as is found in European countries.

The Current Tourism Market²

Visitors to the Capital Region

The Anacostia Trails Heritage Area and Prince George's County in general are considered part of the Washington, D.C. Capital Region for the

² This section and the next section are based upon the work of Bay Area Economics, sub-consultant to JMA/Watson.

purposes of analyzing the potential market for tourism. An understanding of this market can suggest ways and means of promoting ATHA to those visitors who are already coming to the region. Characterization of the current tourism market is based on 1998 figures, the most recent data available, and is drawn from information made available by the Washington, D.C., Convention and Visitors Association (WCVA).

In 1998, 19.6 million domestic visitors and 1.6 million international travelers visited the region, largely for pleasure (57 percent), business or a convention (31 percent). In general, visitation to the region has been on the rise since 1991, although these 1998 figures are slightly down from the high of 20.9 million total visitors in 1997. The most common states of origin for domestic visitors were Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, California, Florida, New Jersey, Maryland, and North Carolina. One million of these visitors came on group tours.

Tourism in this region occurs year-round, but there is some seasonal variation: highest levels are spring (31 percent) and summer (28 percent), when the level of pleasure visitors augments the flow. Business travel also increases slightly in these seasons. Winter accounts for 19 percent of visitors and autumn for 22 percent.

The average length of stay for a domestic visitor to this region is 2.4 nights. This average includes day trips. For overnight visitors only, the average length of stay is 3.4 nights. Many visitors spend an additional 1.8 nights outside the region on the same trip, to Virginia (44 percent), Maryland (39 percent) or Pennsylvania (12 percent). International visitors spend, on average, 4.7 nights in the Washington, D.C., area as part of an average trip of 24 days to the United States. The most international visitors from individual countries originated in the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, France, and Japan. The Far East as a whole contributes more than any one of these countries, and Central and South America contribute more than any country except the United Kingdom.

While in the region, most visitors who stayed overnight stayed in a hotel, motel or bed and breakfast (42 percent). Private home stays accounted for the lodging for 26 percent of all visitors. Nearly a third, 29 percent, did not stay overnight in the region—approximately 6 million. If these are visitors willing to take a day trip to Washington, D.C., many are likely to live near enough to take a day trip to events and attractions within ATHA.

More than 80 percent of all visitors to the region travel without children: 17 percent of all traveling parties include children, two on average, but 30 percent of pleasure visitors travel with at least one child (up from 25 percent in 1997). More than half of the region's visitors arrive by automobile, and more than a third arrive by air.

Of the region's domestic pleasure travelers, 59 percent are college graduates with a median household income of \$46,700. On average, these

visitors spend \$328 per trip for visitors staying overnight, the figure is actually higher, since this average includes day trips. For all visitors, business and pleasure, direct spending includes lodging (32 percent), meals (38 percent), retail (19 percent), local transportation (7 percent) and entertainment/miscellaneous (5 percent).



Tourists, such as these at the 19th-century Bladensburg spa, have been coming to this area for more than 150 years.

Visitors to Prince George's County

For Prince George's County (statistics are not available for a portion of a county such as ATHA), data from the Maryland Office of Tourism Development for the four-year period between 1994 and 1997 suggests an average of 714,000 visitors per year. The county had 1,273,905 visitors in 1998. Pleasure visitors during that period accounted for 66 percent; 61 percent were traveling alone and 84 percent of travel parties did not include children. These visitors largely travel here in their own vehicles (71 percent). Another 18 percent arrive by plane.

The most common states of origin over this period were Virginia, Maryland and New York, contributing 40 percent of the total. Nearly a third did not stay overnight; 19 percent stayed for only one night. Visitors who stayed for two nights comprise 14 percent of the total; for 3 nights, 13 percent; and visitors who stayed for 4 or more nights comprise 22 percent of total visitation. While in the county, 42 percent of visitors who stayed overnight stayed in a private home; 28 percent stayed in paid accommodations. The high percentage of visitors staying with family or friends in a private home (roughly 300,000 visitors per year) suggests that marketing the attractions in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area to local residents would have a significant carry-over effect on tourist visitation. Visitors to Prince George's County spend, on average, about \$338 per trip.

Trends in tourism in Maryland, comparing activities in the Capital Region from 1996 to 1997, show a 57 percent increase in the percentage of visitors who shop while on their trip (from 33 percent to 52 percent of all visitors). The percentage of travelers visiting historic sites and museums fell by 36 percent (from 23 percent of visitors to only 15 percent in 1997).

POTENTIAL VISITATION AND ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

Estimating potential visitation to ATHA involves examining the current visitation to attractions here, understanding their capacity, and comparing these sites to similar sites elsewhere with different patterns of visitation. It is, therefore, an art, not a science. Comparable sites, for example, are a matter of judgment, and a frequent caveat is that the subject sites must spend both on marketing and on the costs of supporting increased tourism. That said, it is worth examining several existing attractions for an idea of what might be possible in the way of increased visitation.

✿ The NASA Goddard Visitor Center currently receives some 65,000 visitors per year. Experience at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama, with a larger facility and more extensive program (including the popular manned space flight program and the nationally known Space Camp) suggests that the facility here could attract 100,000 to 125,000 visitors, given an upgraded visitor experience and enhanced marketing, particularly of the NASA Goddard role in maintaining the Hubble space telescope.

✿ The College Park Aviation Museum, with enhanced marketing and linkages to other attractions in ATHA, could potentially raise its predicted visitation from 90,000 to 115,000.

✿ The National Wildlife Visitor Center currently receives 65,000 visitors per year, with another 100,000 visitors to the refuge. With linkages to other natural resource experiences in the Heritage Area (e.g., the Anacostia Tributary Trails System, the Patuxent River and the Anacostia River) and significantly increased marketing, 100,000 visits could be made to the visitor center. The Blackwater National Wildlife Preserve on Maryland's Eastern Shore attracts as many as 400,000 to 500,000 visitors to the refuge as a whole (perhaps 140,000 to the visitor center), but has more capacity (much of the land associated with the Patuxent facilities is closed for research purposes).

✿ Montpelier Mansion and Riversdale, which attract 15,500 and 10,000 visitors respectively with their limited hours but ambitious programming, could aim to double their visitation with aggressive marketing and longer hours. This judgment is based on visitation to other house museums in the region (not counting Mount Vernon) that receive visitation ranging from 10,000 to 46,000. (Of the four sites reporting data on visitor segmentation, out of a group of nine, three report a high proportion of local visitors, from 70 to 80 percent.



The College Park Aviation Museum offers the visitor impressive exhibits of early flying machines. It is one of a number of high-quality heritage sites that together attract an estimated half-million visitors a year.

Blackwater, a remote site in a rural area, reports a 50:50 ratio of local to outside visitors.)

From this sampling of the area's attractions for comparison, it appears that it may be possible to increase visitation to ATHA's existing "anchor" sites by approximately 50 percent, or 250,000 visitors. This visitation could be drawn from four primary target markets: those 500,000 or so visitors already visiting one site in the area, who could be persuaded to visit more sites during their trip or at another time, if they are visiting for the day; the 300,000 or so visitors to The University of Maryland, and the 100,000 each to Laurel's Main Street Festival and the Patuxent Research Refuge; the 2.1 million visitors who spend the night every year in Prince George's County (a 1998 figure); and visitors to the Washington, D.C., region, about 20 million, especially the 6 million who are probably from the region. These numbers do not include anticipated (but not, as yet, estimated) visitors to proposed new heritage sites in the area, especially the North Brentwood Museum and the Dinosaur Park.

Another estimate for visitation to the area concerns lodging. From hotel occupancy estimates, Prince George's County hotels accommodated an estimated 2.1 million visitors in 1998, or roughly 10 percent of the region's visitors. It is reasonable to estimate that with improvements and marketing resulting from ATHA, the number of hotel guests could potentially increase by 5 to 10 percent, approximately 100,000 to 200,000. These numbers potentially would relate to visitor patterns now in the region or the county, in which approximately 35 percent of all visitors stay only for a day so that if the Heritage Area were to boost visitation by an additional 250,000, some 160,000 might be expected to stay at least one night. This figure could be much lower, as low as 50,000, if the local-visitor patterns of 80 percent reported by house museums in the region were to hold true for all sites in this Heritage Area. The actual impact of increased visitation to the Heritage Area's attractions on the number of hotel stays will depend on the target markets and the success of promotion.

Although most of the new visitors to Heritage Area attractions will be Maryland residents, one-quarter, or 63,000, visitors are expected to come to the Heritage Area from outside the state, bringing new dollars to the state and local economies. For visitors to the region attracted to stay in Heritage Area hotels, 95 percent, or 24,000 to 48,000, are assumed to be from outside Maryland. Based on statistics provided by the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, these regional visitors are likely to have an average of 1.8 persons per party, representing an additional 13,000 to 27,000 groups of new regional visitors.

With average expenditures of \$338 per party per trip, \$16.0 to \$20.9 million in incremental new spending will be generated. A portion of those expenditures, estimated at 40 to 70 percent of retail and other non-lodging expenditures, will be spent outside Maryland, elsewhere in the region. Thus, new spending generated for Maryland businesses is

projected to reach \$11.0 to \$13.8 million with full implementation of the management plan actions. The following is a breakdown of total new visitor spending and the dollars to be spent in Maryland.

	Total New Expenditures by Visitors from Outside Maryland (in millions)	New Dollars Spent in Maryland (in millions)
Lodging	\$5.2 - \$6.7	\$4.8 - \$6.3
Meals	6.2 - 7.9	3.6 - 4.4
Retail	3.1 - 4.0	1.4 - 1.6
Local Transportation	1.1 - 1.5	0.8 - 0.9
Entertainment/Miscellaneous	0.7 - 0.8	0.4 - 0.5
Total	\$16.3 - \$20.9	\$11.0 - \$13.7

Return on Investment

Investment in heritage tourism in ATHA is expected to result in a significant economic return that will justify state, local and other investment. The following returns are expected:

- ✿ Increases in state sales, income, gasoline and property tax revenues.
- ✿ Increases in county property, “piggy-back” income, admissions and hotel occupancy tax revenues.
- ✿ Increases in municipal property tax revenues.
- ✿ Increases in public transportation fare revenues.
- ✿ Construction of new tourist support service facilities such as hotel/motel rooms, restaurants and entertainment facilities.
- ✿ Renovations to small businesses in the vicinity of tourist attractions.
- ✿ Increases in admissions fees collected at existing attractions.
- ✿ Creation of new tourist attractions.

The specific benefits to the state are calculated as follows for the sales and income taxes. These are expected to be the biggest revenue generators for the state. The State of Maryland collects a five percent sales tax. Ninety percent of the new visitor sales are assumed to be taxable. Also taxed at the same rate are hotel rooms and restaurant revenues. This analysis excludes hotel occupancy taxes levied by Prince George’s County. Individual employees pay state income taxes on a sliding scale; 90 percent of the new jobs are expected to be held by Maryland residents. The state’s share of real property taxes is less than 10 percent of total property taxes, \$0.21 per \$100 of assessed value.

The following are estimated annual state tax returns from the heritage tourism investments at full fruition.

**Annual Sales Tax Revenue at Full Implementation of the Heritage
Tourism Program**

Tax	Revenue
Sales Taxes	\$242,000 - \$296,000
Hotel Sales Taxes	242,000 - 315,000
Income Taxes	100,000 - 128,000
Real Property Taxes	13,000 - 17,000
Total Tax Revenues	\$597,000 - \$756,000

Investment in heritage tourism initiatives to improve and expand attractions, to increase marketing, and to create programmatic linkages among attractions will generate an estimated \$597,000 to \$756,000 in annual state revenues.

BENEFITS OF HERITAGE TOURISM

A strategic approach to heritage tourism will contribute to the economic vitality of ATHA in three ways:

- ❁ First, it can directly stimulate revitalization of some buildings and commercial areas through added revenues to retailers and restauranteurs who invest in their properties. In addition, other entrepreneurs seeking to capitalize on the market stimulated by heritage tourism will be attracted. The many small commercial neighborhoods in ATHA were built in a time when nearby residents could not travel as far to shop as they do today and when there were many more residents per household. The demand for shopping and services in these neighborhoods has declined as a result of these factors. Tourism can boost this demand, moreover, with new dollars drawn from beyond the community, and add new entrepreneurial opportunities.
- ❁ Second, heritage tourism can be a key part of the economic mix of a community. Typical economic sectors found in ATHA are government, manufacturing, and services such as banking and the computer industry. These easily add up to more jobs and revenues than tourism. Heritage tourism contributes in a different way, by drawing new dollars from beyond the community and by stimulating economic diversity through small and independent businesses.
- ❁ Third, the reputation and perception of authenticity, quality and a special heritage add to the intangible appeal of a community's identity. With many choices of places to invest, developers will choose those with added value: recreational and historic sites for their

executives and employees to enjoy, communities with character and charm where they would want to live, and local leaders committed to maintaining the quality of life. The messages about these qualities, which must be projected to heritage tourists, also reinforce a community's outreach to other potential investors and developers.

Historic sites and communities, shopping experiences, and recreational opportunities that appeal to heritage tourists are also appealing to residents. These residents are, in fact, ATHA's "first market" those who come to understand the story of this place and its possibilities. Through exposure to the Heritage Area's vision and learning opportunities, they become supporters of individual sites and vocal on behalf of this special place, to serve as a "constituency" in support of enhanced investment and development decisions to reinforce the area's appeal not only to tourists, but to residents.

VISITOR SAFETY

ATHA attractions fall under the jurisdiction of a large number of police agencies: Prince George's County Police Department, M-NCPPC Park Police, U.S. Park Police, Maryland State Police, Maryland Natural Resources Police, The University of Maryland Campus Police, WMATA Transit Police, WSSC Reservoir Police, the municipal police departments of Bladensburg, Berwyn Heights, Cottage City, Edmonston, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, Laurel, Mount Rainier, Riverdale Park and University Park, as well as the security departments at federal facilities such as NASA and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. At the 1995 White House Conference on Travel and Tourism held in Washington, D. C., delegates identified a need to address visitor safety at tourism sites throughout the United States. Visitor safety will be considered in each proposed project and the appropriate police department(s) will be involved in visitor safety measures.

HERITAGE TOURISM FINDINGS

During the planning process, the following key findings emerged:

- ✿ ATHA already has a significant number of visitors to heritage-related sites: National Wildlife Visitor Center, Greenbelt National Park, National Visitor Center at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and College Park Aviation Museum.
- ✿ The Heritage Area's three historic house museums (Montpelier Mansion, Greenbelt and Riversdale) and one local history museum (the Laurel Museum) have fewer visitors than the major attractions and generally rely on volunteers to assist in operating them.
- ✿ Visitors to The University of Maryland offer a possible strong market.
- ✿ All of the aforementioned sites together with the state welcome centers at I-95 rest areas north of Laurel already form a significant ad hoc visitor reception system that could be developed further, but it

needs to be extended to the southern end of the area. Both Bladensburg and Mount Rainier have proposed visitor centers that would meet this need.

- ✿ Wayfinding in the area is a challenge, and there is a perception that the area is confusing and difficult to navigate.
- ✿ A considerable number of heritage attractions are already in the planning stages:
 - ❖ The Bladensburg Waterfront Park
 - ❖ Bladensburg's proposed retreat and conference center at Bostwick (c. 1746)
 - ❖ Maryland's *Star Spangled Banner* National Historic Trail, under study by the National Park Service, to interpret the War of 1812 and featuring the Battle of Bladensburg



Bostwick was built in 1746 in the newly established port town of Bladensburg.

- ❖ The National History of Flight Trail, linking Cape Canaveral, Kitty Hawk and Dayton, Ohio, and featuring several key sites in ATHA
- ❖ The North Brentwood Museum, interpreting Maryland's first African-American suburb and its families
- ❖ Additions to Riversdale to add to its interpretation: a reconstructed octagonal barn; improvements to a key interior space, the salon; and restoration of an outbuilding
- ❖ Dinosaur Park, at a site owned by M-NCPPC, where important paleontological deposits have been found

- ✿ Other possible heritage attractions mentioned during the planning process that appear to be feasible are:
 - ❖ A Muppet Museum in College Park (Jim Henson was a graduate of The University of Maryland)
 - ❖ The rebirth of Ammendale Normal Institute in Beltsville as a heritage and conference center serving the county and nearby businesses
 - ❖ The development of a wetland environmental education program. Such a facility could become an “eco-musee,” to use the French term for a facility that interprets the natural and cultural history of a particular geographic area
- ✿ The area supports a high number of performing arts events. The university’s new Clarice Smith Center for the Performing Arts, completed in 2001, will add tremendously to the range of offerings available.
- ✿ Communities have a good number of celebrations and events, with a wide range of topics, but these could be coordinated and marketed more effectively as a joint effort. The mix of events should be studied with an eye toward rounding out the offerings system-wide: paying attention to geographic distribution, interpretive themes, and seasonality. No heritage area-wide events exist yet.
- ✿ Coordination among museums in the Heritage Area exists as part of the larger Prince George’s County History Consortium. This informal organization evolved following a highly successful use of a “passport” system in celebration of the county’s 300th anniversary in 1996. So far, the group has published a colorful, professionally designed brochure for regional distribution and has begun designing group tour packages.
- ✿ There are many appealing, distinctive “front porch” communities. Hyattsville, Riverdale Park and Laurel already offer walking tours; others could easily be developed.
- ✿ There is a significant amount of attractive green space, parks and trails.
- ✿ The appearance of the US 1 corridor does not match many of the attractive and well-maintained neighborhoods beyond that corridor. There are a number of US 1 improvement studies underway.
- ✿ There is no bed and breakfast lodging.
- ✿ There are few unique dining experiences, especially fine dining, although the area has many restaurants of an impressive variety.
- ✿ Aggressive marketing, promotion and programs are needed so that word of mouth about the “real” Prince George’s County has a chance to take hold.

KEY ELEMENTS OF A HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY

There are four key elements in the ATHA tourism strategy:

1. Creation of a comprehensive interpretive system relying largely on “anchors” provided by existing heritage attractions. This system is described in Chapter Four. Supporting this system will be a comprehensive visitor reception system and a wayfinding system of signs and written guides. Visitor reception and orientation to the area’s history and offerings would be incorporated into existing visitor centers, heritage attractions, and municipal centers.
2. Promotion of stewardship, the assurance of the long-term preservation and protection of cultural, historic, scenic and natural resources within the Heritage Area and celebration of these special resources. The strategies to be implemented by private owners of special resources, other private organizations, municipalities, and county, state, and federal agencies are presented in Chapter Five.
3. Linkage of heritage attractions and other interpretive signs by themed driving tours, to be called “Anacostia Trails.” These would also be linked by a large system of multiuse recreational trails, anchored by the Anacostia Tributary Trails System, and would ultimately become an extensive network easily accessible from any site or community throughout the entire Anacostia Trails Heritage Area. Both systems are described in Chapter Six.
4. The creation of a system of focused areas, termed “Target Investment Zones” by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, for local investment and development to provide services and entertainment to heritage tourists. Public financial assistance, consisting of matching grants for projects, matching loans for projects, and tax credits for Certified Heritage Structures available from MHAA, will be used within these focus areas to produce attractions and to stimulate private investment, job creation, and tourism revenues. Matching grants may also be used for some eligible projects throughout ATHA. This system is described in Chapter Seven.

