



Public Summary *Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Management Plan*

BACKGROUND

This management plan describes the heritage tourism program for the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) in northern Prince George's County. ATHA is a territory of some 83.7 square miles, encompassing 14 municipalities as well as many neighborhoods in the unincorporated portions of the county. It is bounded on three sides by the county border and on the east, in part, by the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and in part by a line further east following federal land ownership to the Patuxent River, the county's northern and eastern boundary. The federal, state and local governments own 38 percent of the land in ATHA.

Maryland has established The Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program to identify Heritage Areas where additional state resources are to be devoted to preserving historic, natural and cultural resources and to developing programs that encourage tourism. The program is administered by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA). Besides its power to recognize and certify Heritage Areas, MHAA may make matching grants and loans for "planning, design, property acquisition, development, preservation, restoration, interpretation, marketing and programming" and may extend state income tax credits for the rehabilitation of certified heritage structures. With state certification, ATHA will have access to these MHAA programs. In order for ATHA to become certified as a Heritage Area, the Management Plan must address these specific topics: Vision and Goals, Significance, Strategies for Achieving Optimum Visitation, Interpretation, Strategies for Enhancing Heritage Resources, Stewardship Strategies, Strategies for Linkages, Strategies for Encouraging Compatible Economic Development, and Leadership and Organization.

In 1996 the Anacostia Heritage Area Partnership and Prince George's Heritage (PGH) successfully applied for Heritage Area recognition. PGH further secured a management planning grant that was matched by the municipalities, M-NCPPC, the Prince George's County government, and private organizations. A consulting firm was hired in 1998. During early

1999, the Prince George's County Council granted permission to initiate the planning process, ATHA leaders sponsored two public visioning workshops, and the Planning Board held a public forum. Later in 1999, the County Council approved Goals, Concepts, Guidelines and a Public Participation Program, and ATHA leaders conducted a public presentation of ideas and issues and a public workshop.

The Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Management Plan will become one of Prince George's County's functional plans and will be an amendment to the Prince George's County *General Plan* and approved by the County Council. Similarly, with the approval of the Laurel City Council, the City of Laurel will incorporate the ATHA management plan as an addendum to the City of Laurel Master Plan.

VISION AND GOALS

The vision is to create a major tourist destination in ATHA where visitors may come and enjoy a wide variety of attractions along the trail system, visit well-maintained communities, stay overnight at a comfortable hotel, eat at any number of different restaurants, and conduct research if so inclined, all while spending tourist dollars and thereby contributing to the success of the area, its resources, and its citizens. Goals for the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area are to:

- ✿ Promote understanding of the importance of the area's Historic Sites to the history of Maryland and the history of our nation.
- ✿ Conserve and interpret natural and recreational resources and open spaces in the Heritage Area in support of heritage tourism.
- ✿ Preserve and enhance Historic Sites and cultural resources in the Heritage Area.
- ✿ Expand and enhance linkages among heritage attractions throughout the Heritage Area.
- ✿ Expand existing partnerships and create new opportunities for partnerships to achieve the goals of the Heritage Area.
- ✿ Promote development of the arts in the Heritage Area.
- ✿ Improve the image of towns, the river and the entire Heritage Area through heritage tourism efforts.
- ✿ Organize and unite communities and facilities by disseminating information and interpreting our shared history.
- ✿ Increase economic activity, create jobs, boost small business development and create a stronger tax base as a result of expanded heritage tourism opportunities.



Montpelier Mansion, built for the Snowden family in the 1780s, is one of four National Historic Landmarks in the Heritage Area.

HERITAGE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The natural and cultural resources of ATHA are significant in four ways:

- ✿ ATHA contains historical resources that chronicle the invention, development and improvement of transportation and communication firsts in the United States.
- ✿ ATHA contains distinctive examples of the settlement and growth patterns of communities that resulted from their proximity to the nation's capital.
- ✿ ATHA is the site of one of the most significant events in the War of 1812, the Battle of Bladensburg.
- ✿ The natural resources of ATHA, and the history of man's use of these resources, from Native American settlements to the space program, possess exceptional value in interpreting the heritage of Maryland and the nation.

ATHA has an abundance of historical and architectural landmarks:

- ✿ There are four National Register Historic Districts (Hyattsville, Mount Rainier, University Park, and Greenbelt).
- ✿ The planned community of Greenbelt is a National Historic Landmark.
- ✿ Montpelier Mansion is one of the finest examples of 18th-century Georgian architecture in the state.
- ✿ Riversdale (also known as the Calvert Mansion) is a unique combination of high-style American and European architecture.
- ✿ College Park Airport is the world's oldest continuously operated airport.
- ✿ Two important examples of early commercial buildings are the George Washington House, originally built as a store in approximately 1760, and the Market Master's House, built in 1765 at the edge of Bladensburg's bustling market space.
- ✿ Rossborough Inn and Brown's White House Tavern reflect the history of the old Washington and Baltimore Turnpike system.
- ✿ ATHA is also rich in African-American sites: St. Paul's/Free Hope Baptist Church, the (North) Brentwood A.M.E. Zion Church, Queen's Chapel, St. Mark's Church, and Abraham Hall.
- ✿ Since 1975, the City of Laurel has established seven historic districts guiding the rehabilitation of homes and storefronts throughout the Main Street Corridor.

The Northwest Branch is one of the two major tributaries of the Anacostia River and has the highest riverscape diversity and some of the most scenic spots in the Heritage Area. The Anacostia Tributary Trails



Abraham Hall, a benevolent society lodge built in 1889, has since that time been the focal point of the African-American community of Rossville.

System, a key linkage in ATHA, is composed of several branches along the tributaries of the Anacostia River.

The major concentration of cultural and educational landmarks in Prince George's County is located within ATHA.

- ✿ The University of Maryland at College Park is a major center of scholarly activity with eight libraries including the McKeldin Library and the National Trust for Historic Preservation Library Collection.
- ✿ The Goddard Space Flight Center Visitor Center highlights the many accomplishments of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).
- ✿ The National Wildlife Visitor Center at the Patuxent Research Refuge educates visitors about the role of wildlife research in preserving the earth's vital resources.
- ✿ The National Visitor Center at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center educates visitors about food and farm sciences in plant breeding, animal and human nutrition, and the products and inventions of agricultural science.
- ✿ The National Archives and Records Administration acquires, protects and makes available for research records of enduring value created or received by the various branches of the federal government.
- ✿ The Montpelier Cultural Arts Center hosts cultural events that include visual arts exhibits, classical music competitions, master's workshops, and dance programs.
- ✿ The Publick Playhouse offers affordable art and dance presentations to residents of the area.
- ✿ The College Park Aviation Museum offers many outstanding educational programs, volunteer opportunities and hands-on children's activities.
- ✿ The Greenbelt Museum invites visitors to experience the lives of ordinary Americans during two momentous events of the 20th century, the Great Depression and World War II.
- ✿ The Laurel Museum highlights the history of the city and its early 19th-century cotton textile factories.
- ✿ The Town of North Brentwood is planning to construct a museum on the history of the African-American settlement of the area.
- ✿ A walking tour at Bladensburg Waterfront Park explains the many historic events that have taken place in ATHA.



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.

An outstanding variety of leisure-time options for both participants and spectators is available within ATHA:

- ✿ M-NCPPC manages 18 neighborhood parks, 6 community centers, 4 playgrounds, 2 swimming pools, several ballfields, an ice rink,

Bladensburg Waterfront Park, Lake Artemesia, Paint Branch Golf Course, Linson/Wells Recreational Complex, and Fairland Regional Center.

- ✿ Some municipalities also offer park and recreation facilities and programs.
- ✿ The University of Maryland Recreation Center features gymnasiums, racquetball courts, indoor and outdoor pools, weight-training areas, and an indoor jogging track.
- ✿ Greenbelt Park, owned by the National Park Service, features equestrian and nature trails, picnic areas and camping.
- ✿ The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission permits boating and fishing at its Rocky Gorge Reservoir.
- ✿ Laurel’s Riverfront Park and Gude Park offer easily accessible and serene environments for recreation, sports and leisure.

A STRATEGY FOR HERITAGE TOURISM

ATHA is within the Washington, D.C., metropolitan 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. Both “eco-tourism,” focusing on natural features and environments, and “heritage tourism,” focusing on cultural and historic features and sites, can be combined in ATHA.

In 1998, 19.6 million domestic visitors and 1.6 million international travelers visited the region. Prince George’s County had 1,273,905 visitors in 1998. While in the county, 42 percent of visitors stayed overnight in private homes. This high percentage of visitors staying with family or friends suggests that marketing the attractions in ATHA 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.

From the following 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.

- ✿ 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, suggests that the facility here could attract 100,000 to 125,000 visitors.
- ✿ The College Park Aviation Museum 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 linkages to other natural resource experiences



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

in the Heritage Area and significantly increased marketing, 100,000 visits could be made to the visitor center.

- ✿ Montpelier Mansion and Riversdale could aim to double their visitation with aggressive marketing and longer hours.

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.

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.

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.
- ✿ Second, heritage tourism can be a key part of the economic mix of a community.
- ✿ Third, the reputation and perception of authenticity, quality and a special heritage add to the intangible appeal of a community’s identity.

During the planning process, a number of key findings emerged, including the following examples:

- ✿ ATHA already has a significant number of visitors to heritage-related sites.
- ✿ The Heritage Area’s three historic house museums and one local history museum have fewer visitors than the major attractions and generally rely on volunteers to assist in operating them.



Riversdale was begun in 1801 by the Stier family and finished by Rosalie and George Calvert. The plantation house combines American and European features, and is one of four National Historic Landmarks in the Heritage Area.

- ✿ Visitors to The University of Maryland offer a possible strong market.
- ✿ 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 area supports a high number of performing arts events.
- ✿ Communities have a good number of celebrations and events, but these could be coordinated and marketed more effectively as a joint effort.
- ✿ There is a significant amount of attractive green space, parks and trails.

These findings led to the development of four key elements in ATHA tourism strategy:

1. Creation of a comprehensive interpretive system relying largely on “anchors” provided by existing heritage attractions.
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.
3. Linkage of heritage attractions and other interpretive signs by themed driving tours to be called “Anacostia Trails.”
4. Creation of a system of focused areas, termed “Target Investment Zones” by the MHAA, for local investment and development to provide services and entertainment to heritage tourists.

A STRATEGY FOR INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is one of the key elements of heritage tourism. A good interpretive program can build public understanding of the cultural and natural history of a Heritage Area. The following findings address the current condition of interpretation in the Heritage Area:

- ✿ ATHA possesses remarkably diverse and well-developed heritage attractions and related resources.
- ✿ Together with undeveloped heritage resources, ATHA can support a rich array of tourism experiences.
- ✿ Aside from actions of the Prince George’s County Conference and Visitors Bureau, marketing, events planning and resource sharing among existing attractions are not well coordinated.
- ✿ Existing attractions are not well linked, physically or interpretively.
- ✿ Many attractions are not open full-time.



Each successive century has seen the development of a different mode of transportation. This 1909 photograph shows a Wright aeroplane flying over a train on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad tracks near College Park Airport.

- ✿ There is no single facility or program for visitor orientation to the Heritage Area.

The recommended interpretive framework for ATHA is based on the following four primary themes, along with various subthemes:

*Theme: Linking the Nation—Transportation and Communication
Firsts in ATHA*

ATHA is significant because of the remarkable number of intact historical and cultural resources that were developed as a direct result of the need for better means of transportation and communication. Each century has seen the development, perfection or production of a different mode of transportation or method of communication that has affected not only the local landscape but the national character as well. This is particularly true in the field of aviation as the entire timespan of aerospace history is represented within the Heritage Area.



In 1784 Bladensburg was the site of the first unmanned balloon ascent in America.

- ✿ Subtheme: Weary Traveler—The Turnpike System, Taverns and Inns
- ✿ Subtheme: The Nation’s Main Street—Baltimore Avenue (US 1)
- ✿ Subtheme: Aviation Firsts—From the Balloon to the Moon
- ✿ Subtheme: Streetcar Suburbs

Theme: Settlement, Development and the Growth of Communities

Settlement along the Anacostia River followed, by about two generations, settlements of mill towns like Laurel along the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers. Bladensburg was established in 1742, just below the confluence of the Northeast and Northwest Branches of the Anacostia. During the 19th century, new towns began to develop at the intersections of the various arteries of transportation, and after the Civil War, several African-American communities began to form.

- ✿ Subtheme: The Rise of the African-American Middle Class—African-American Community and Culture
- ✿ Subtheme: Notable Citizens
- ✿ Subtheme: Education
- ✿ Subtheme: Pattern Book and Sears Mail-Order Houses
- ✿ Subtheme: Greenbelt, A Planned Greentown
- ✿ Subtheme: Religion and Early Churches
- ✿ Subtheme: Industry in ATHA

Theme: The Bladensburg Races—The War of 1812 in ATHA

Bladensburg was the site of a battle during the War of 1812. The battle, a British victory, is often called the “Bladensburg Races” because the poorly prepared and commanded Maryland Militia either fled the scene

entirely or fell back twice before mounting a last-ditch effort. After this battle, the British invaded Washington; however, although the United States lost the encounter and the Capital suffered badly, the Battle of Bladensburg caused enough delay to permit key documents to be removed to safety.

Theme: The Natural Environment

ATHA is primarily an urban area of municipalities and suburban communities, but the area does include several large tracts of parkland, natural settings and wildlife preserves. These are the 4,700-acre Patuxent Research Refuge along the Patuxent River, the 7,000-acre Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, the 1,100-acre Greenbelt Park (part of the National Park System), and the 15-mile-long Anacostia Tributary Trails System.

- ✿ Subtheme: Wildlife and Agricultural Research Centers
- ✿ Subtheme: “Let’s Take a Walk”—Trail Systems of ATHA
- ✿ Subtheme: Nature Calls—Nature Centers of the Heritage Area
- ✿ Subtheme: Dinosaur Park
- ✿ Subtheme: A Natural History of Agriculture

A primary feature of ATHA will be the creation of a large number of interpretive trails and driving and cycling tours, as well as walking tours, that interpret or reinforce the various themes and subthemes. The realization of a system for interpretation is critical to the success of ATHA. The following actions are recommended:

- ✿ Creation of a comprehensive interpretive plan under the guidance of directors of all interpretive sites in the Heritage Area.
- ✿ Facilitation of increased public access, group use, and marketing and promotion for Heritage Area attractions and encouragement of partnerships with businesses and agencies involved in tourism and visitor accommodation.
- ✿ Development of a program to enhance visitors’ experiences in ATHA.

The construction of new visitor centers in ATHA is not a part of the overall strategy, which relies on using the many existing visitor reception and interpretive sites already present. Actions here relate to the design of an overall signage system that would include wayfinding (directional) signs, outdoor interpretive signs, and distinctive kiosks at key locations to alert visitors to nearby sites and upcoming events. Public outreach programs would explain not only how and why to protect historic and natural resources, but could also spark enthusiasm for the resources themselves and the history and educational opportunities they represent. The following actions are recommended:



The elegant Common Egret is a familiar sight along the waterways of the Heritage Area.

- ✿ Encouragement of schools to create a student intern program to study regional and local history.
- ✿ Publication and distribution of an Anacostia Trails Newsletter.
- ✿ Enhancement and maintenance of an ATHA website.
- ✿ Creation of a welcome packet for new residents.
- ✿ Publication of a guidebook and video.
- ✿ Creation of a transit rider's guide.

A STRATEGY FOR STEWARDSHIP

The Maryland System of Heritage Areas was founded in part to provide greater state support and funding for the conservation and preservation of historic, natural and cultural resources in identified areas. Such restoration, conservation and preservation is called stewardship. Key stewardship findings are:



University Park streetscape.

- ✿ ATHA comprises many attractive neighborhoods, some of which are National Register Historic Districts.
- ✿ Most of the active commercial areas need attention in order to increase their potential to provide tourist support services.
- ✿ Historic preservation incentives are not widely used.
- ✿ Many historic properties are being well maintained, as a result of the county's historic preservation program and individual property owners' stewardship.
- ✿ Open space, parks and trails are abundant and the Anacostia Tributary Trails System is a splendid linkage for the cultural, natural and historic resources.
- ✿ Environmental programs and initiatives enjoy broad community support.
- ✿ A vibrant arts community with strong tourism potential is active in ATHA.
- ✿ Cultural diversity is a hallmark of the Heritage Area and has strong tourism potential.

The stewardship strategy consists of four elements: Community Design; Historic Preservation; Natural Resource Conservation; and Arts, Cultural Resources and Traditions Enhancement. Community design is related to heritage tourism because the appearance of the Heritage Area affects the viability of tourism resources and amenities. In general, the areas most visible to tourists should receive attention, particularly those in the vicinity of attractions. The plan supports the following activities:

- ✿ Improvement of streetscapes and other aesthetic features to make those parts of the Heritage Area in the vicinity of attractions more appealing, safe and vibrant.

- ✿ Improvement of the appearance of properties in conjunction with property owners.
- ✿ Creation of a community beautification and maintenance awards program.
- ✿ Encouragement of the use of the arts as one of the focal points for the visitors' experiences along US 1.
- ✿ Support for a US 1 strategic planning effort.
- ✿ Encouragement of development of a "sense of place" along US 1 on a project-by-project basis.

Historic preservation is an important aspect of every heritage development program. The 1992 Prince George's County *Historic Sites and Districts Plan* outlines a program for historic preservation implemented through a Historic Preservation Ordinance and through the planning and zoning processes. Recommendations that are particularly suited to complement provisions of the Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program include:

- ✿ Incentive programs that recognize the importance and economic value of historic preservation in creating stable neighborhoods and vibrant commercial areas of both public and commercial buildings
- ✿ Incentives for private property owners
- ✿ Adaptive use recommendations
- ✿ Other recommendations that increase preservation awareness and tangibly link it with economic development benefits anticipated in designation and certification as a Certified Maryland Heritage Area.

There are four National Register districts in the Heritage Area. More communities in the Heritage Area should pursue National Register listing in order to extend tax benefits to their property owners. Local historic district designation can help to protect the historic fabric of a neighborhood. In neighborhoods that choose historic district designation, it is likely that property owners will be rewarded with increased property values. It is important to continue to document and inventory local historic properties and districts. A number of Historic Sites have historic and or scenic easements, either donated by the owner or required as a condition of a grant. Prince George's County has a program for the protection and preservation of scenic and historic roads.

Since 1975 the City of Laurel has recognized the historic resources in its community by creating the City of Laurel Historic District Commission. The Commission's Design Guidelines detail the requirements for rehabilitation of properties in order to receive property tax credits. This has been a rewarding program for the city and residents of Laurel, resulting in new facades along Main Street, rehabilitated properties and a focal point for such events as the Laurel Main Street Festival.



This early (circa 1910) photograph shows one of Hyattsville's streets, lined with Victorian houses.

Because this area has been a gathering and settlement area for so long, the prehistoric and historic archaeological record may be rich. Where possible, the preservation and interpretive programs of the Heritage Area should focus on incorporating a greater awareness and appreciation for archaeological resources.

Some of the existing regulations and programs pertaining to natural resource conservation are the following:

- ✿ The Prince George's County Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation Ordinance.
- ✿ The Prince George's County *Landscape Manual*.
- ✿ The county's Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- ✿ The Maryland Sediment Control Act, Prince George's Soil Conservation District
- ✿ The Anacostia Watershed Restoration Committee agreement to restore and protect the Anacostia River.
- ✿ The Capper-Crampton Act through which M-NCPPC owns 1,800 acres of riparian lands in the Prince George's County portion of the Anacostia Watershed.
- ✿ The City of Laurel Forest Conservation Regulations.



An African-American dance group performing at the Publick Playhouse, one of M-NCPPC's comprehensive art facilities.

This plan encourages the following natural resource stewardship activities:

- ✿ Planning and implementing green space as a key element in heritage tourism.
- ✿ Developing strategies for the identification and subsequent control, management, and elimination of invasive species that threaten watersheds and greenways in the Heritage Area.
- ✿ A higher quality of design and utility as the levee system for the Anacostia River's tributaries is rebuilt.
- ✿ Inventorying key ecological assets for preservation and restoration of all watersheds and greenways in the Heritage Area.
- ✿ Restoration, preservation and interpretation of the wetlands of the Anacostia River and its tributaries and promotion of wetlands cleanup.
- ✿ Reforestation of riparian areas within the Anacostia watershed.
- ✿ Development and implementation of sediment-reduction strategies for the Anacostia River to permit boating, improve water quality, and improve aquatic habitat.
- ✿ Continuation of existing programs for the rehabilitation and ecological repair of the Patuxent River, including reduction in sediment loads and the repair of riparian watersheds.

The arts and the appreciation of cultural traditions are important elements of Heritage Area programming for both residents and visitors. The Heritage Area comprises a great many diverse cultural and ethnic groups. Paired with this, the area enjoys an abundance of artists whose creativity enlivens and celebrates these cultures. The Prince George's County Arts Council has proposed a "Cultural Planning Initiative." That initiative is intended to ensure the following:

- ✿ Recognition that culture and the arts are vital in all aspects of community planning.
- ✿ Accessibility and fair distribution of cultural resources.
- ✿ Opportunities for cultural organizations and programs to employ people, attract new businesses, revitalize neighborhoods, and to have the potential of drawing thousands of tourists.
- ✿ Celebration of historic and contemporary cultural diversity of county citizens.

Arts districts are a proven magnet for tourism. The Gateway Municipalities have joined with Hyattsville to begin studying the idea of creating an "arts and entertainment district" in their four communities. This plan supports the following activities:

- ✿ Production of a directory of artists, exhibit spaces, galleries, studios, artist supply stores and other art-related spaces.
- ✿ Development of coordinated marketing through website publicity and packaging of arts events, the Prince George's County Arts Council, and local arts groups.
- ✿ Outreach to Heritage Area artists to identify and meet their needs.
- ✿ Development of loft space as artist living/studio space.
- ✿ Exploration of the development of a timeshare program with local businesses.
- ✿ Installation of creative interpretive art throughout the Heritage Area and use of it as one element of an Anacostia Arts Trail.
- ✿ Encouragement and support of beautification projects using art.

There are considerable stewardship benefits to recognizing and maintaining a thriving and diverse cultural heritage. To that end, the plan supports the following activities:

- ✿ Identification of the ethnic specialties and traditions; identification of any for further study and ultimately interpretation.
- ✿ Development of an inventory of ATHA cultural assets.
- ✿ Development of an ATHA cultural stewardship strategic plan.



This mural was recently painted on a commercial facade on US 1 in Berwyn, celebrating the railroad history of this community.



This picturesque Baltimore & Ohio Railroad station was built in 1884 in Laurel. Sole survivor of the county's Victorian railroad stations, it is a prominent symbol of transportation history.



One of the hiker-biker bridges at Lake Artemesia, part of the Anacostia Tributary Trails System.

A STRATEGY FOR LINKAGES

Existing and potential linkages in great variety are to be found in ATHA, including multiuse recreational paths, waterways, and transit and roadways. Some of the findings on linkages are:

- ✿ The Anacostia Tributary Trails System is one of Maryland's premier greenways.
- ✿ Two planned national hiking trails meet in this region: the East Coast Greenway and the American Discovery Trail.
- ✿ The Anacostia River, by virtue of its tributary status in the Potomac River basin, shares in that river's honor as one of the nation's 14 American Heritage Rivers.
- ✿ The Patuxent River is an important migratory bird flyway and research area.
- ✿ Besides the ordinary system of highway directional signs, there is no existing or planned wayfinding system.
- ✿ There are no specific facilities or programs for visitor orientation to the Heritage Area, but many existing facilities can be adapted.
- ✿ There is a good system of transit services in the area.
- ✿ The area has excellent regional and national access.
- ✿ While the area has an extensive highway network, some arterial roads are congested at certain times of the day and could affect visitor mobility and circulation.

Visitors and residents will need to be able to traverse ATHA easily and locate their destinations. This can be achieved through the development of a wayfinding system. A system of theme-based trails and tour routes for driving, walking, bicycling, boating, and horseback riding will be employed. These trails and tour routes will physically and interpretively link sites in the area.

To maximize the use of recreational trails as linkages, this plan supports the following activities:

The construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting the Bladensburg Waterfront Park to the Colmar Manor Community Park and trails that will be built as part of a wetlands restoration project.

- ✿ The construction of new trails that are environmentally sensitive.
- ✿ National designation for a trail spur along the Anacostia River to connect to the Potomac River National Heritage Trail.
- ✿ An ATHA Trail Development Strategic Plan.
- ✿ Amenities to the Anacostia Tributary Trails System.

- ✿ Extension of the existing Anacostia Tributary Trails System into the City of Laurel and the surrounding areas.
- ✿ The planned extension of the Anacostia Tributary Trails System, known as the Prince George's Connector.
- ✿ Creation of a Trolley Trail from Laurel to Riverdale Park.

Interpretive trails can be walking tours, driving/biking tours, or actual off-road paths. The following are trail possibilities: Research Trail, African-American Heritage Trail, New Nation Trail, Agricultural History Trail, Natural History Trail, Science and Environment Trail, Linking the Nation Trail, Weary Traveler Trail, Main Street Trail, Streetcar Suburbs Trail, Balloon to the Moon Trail, Mail Order Houses Trail, Greenbelt Trail, Stones and Bones Trail, Champion Tree Trail, War of 1812 Trail, Industry and Labor Trail, Education and Research Trail, and Boat Trail. In addition, walking tours of the following places should be developed: Berwyn Heights, College Park's "Old Town," Cottage City, Hyattsville, Laurel, Mount Rainier, North Brentwood, Riverdale Park, University Park, and The University of Maryland.

Today, the role water played in Bladensburg and Laurel is greatly reduced. New connections need to be created for residents and visitors who wish to enjoy the views of the water and the natural setting, or the opportunity to observe wildlife, fish or take a boat ride. To maximize the role of the Anacostia and Patuxent Rivers, the plan encourages the following:

- ✿ Continued dredging or other sediment-reduction programs to provide boat access to and from the Bladensburg Waterfront Park.
- ✿ Development of a railroad bridge opening schedule to improve opportunities for larger boats on the Anacostia.
- ✿ Creation of further canoe access points at the Bladensburg Waterfront Park and at other sites.
- ✿ Development of the Laurel riverfront with a walking trail and pedestrian river crossing to the Laurel Park racecourse.

The Heritage Area is a diverse and densely developed place. Wayfinding strategies are essential. A comprehensive signage system, consisting of entry or gateway signs, directional or trailblazer signs, and outdoor interpretive signs should be designed and installed throughout the area. In the case of visitor orientation, multiple locations should be organized to receive and orient visitors. Two new town-sponsored visitor centers are proposed at the southern end of the Heritage Area. A number of other sites are under consideration for additional visitor reception and orientation activities.

The vision of "car-free" touring in this area should be pursued. To this end, this plan supports the following activities:



Buses "wrapped" with the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area logo are now carrying passengers in parts of the Heritage Area.



Interpretive signage like this at the Bladensburg Waterfront Park helps visitors enjoy and appreciate the area's historical and environmental attractions.

- ✿ Exploration of the possibility of simplifying public transit connections and transfers.
- ✿ Encouragement of the placement of bus shelters at more stops.
- ✿ Encouragement of hotel shuttle van services to use transit connections.
- ✿ Encouragement of taxi companies to establish special discount rates and other programs for heritage tourists.
- ✿ Encouragement of a bicycle-friendly public transit system.
- ✿ Improvement of pedestrian access to heritage sites.

The idea of a heritage trolley harkening back to the old streetcar line that served this area, has been proposed. If proven feasible, the plan supports the development and operation of the heritage trolley. In addition, this plan supports efforts to investigate the feasibility of packaged day tours by railroad. A commercial carriage tour of Laurel's historic downtown and historic neighborhoods has also been proposed.

IMPLEMENTATION

The State of Maryland provides certain benefits to Certified Heritage Areas (CHAs). Some of these benefits extend throughout a CHA. This plan identifies the following area-wide projects as eligible for matching grants under this provision:

- ✿ The creation of an interpretive plan.
- ✿ The provision of interpretation training for docents.
- ✿ The development and installation of a signage system (both directional and interpretive) and visitor kiosks.
- ✿ The development of a guided tour program.
- ✿ The publication of an atlas of ATHA.
- ✿ The documentation, development and interpretation of Underground Railroad sites.
- ✿ The creation of a student intern program to study regional and local history.
- ✿ The maintenance of an ATHA website.
- ✿ The publication of an ATHA newsletter.
- ✿ The creation of a welcome packet for new residents.
- ✿ The publication of an ATHA guidebook.
- ✿ The creation of a transit rider's guide to ATHA.
- ✿ The creation of a trail development strategic plan.
- ✿ The creation of an interpretive trails system and walking tours.
- ✿ The investigation of the feasibility of a heritage trolley.

- ✿ The investigation of the feasibility of package tours by railroad.
- ✿ The creation of a community beautification and maintenance awards program.
- ✿ The development of a cultural stewardship plan.

Other benefits are confined to Target Investment Zones (TIZs). At the time that specific project applications are made to the MHAA, TIZ boundaries will be drawn for the areas in the vicinity of the projects where funds are to be focused. TIZ boundary maps will be submitted with the project applications along with a County Council/County Executive joint signature letter indicating approval. All other required information will also be submitted at that time, to include the following:

- ✿ Amount requested from MHAA, source of matching funds, total project costs, and a project budget.
- ✿ Summary of development activity that has occurred in the past five years and that is expected to occur in the next five to ten years.
- ✿ Marketing studies to support the feasibility of success for the project.
- ✿ A project plan, products to be generated, coordination, schedule and demonstration of grants management experience.
- ✿ Public and private sector projects within the subject areas.
- ✿ Public investment that is occurring in the subject areas.
- ✿ Tax credit programs that will be applicable in the subject areas.
- ✿ Any additional information required to satisfy the state's TIZ designation criteria will also be directly addressed at the time of project application.

The MHAA program proposes to track eight categories of economic development and tourism activities in order to measure the results of the state's investment in heritage tourism. The eight categories are: Employment, Accommodations, Visitation, Purchases, Construction Activity, Business Creation, Interpretation and Protections. A total of 16 performance measures are suggested to be employed. The management entity is responsible for the data collection for eight of the performance measures in five of the categories. In ATHA, the required data will be provided by the management entity.

Elements of this plan may be amended via joint action of the County Council and the County Executive. Such future amendments may include the addition of new projects to the plan or the establishment or amendment of TIZ boundaries.

- ✿ Amendments shall be initiated by the Redevelopment Authority of Prince George's County. The following information shall be included:

- ❖ A description of the proposed amendment(s).



Laurel's Main Street exhibits 19th-century commercial architecture.



The Port Towns regatta at the Bladensburg waterfront.

- ❖ A map of the project boundary and/or the TIZ boundary.
- ❖ A statement that covers each of the following:
 - ✎ The direct relevance of the proposed amendment to heritage tourism or to necessary heritage tourism support services.
 - ✎ Conformance with all relevant provisions and requirements of the Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Act (HB-1-1996).
 - ✎ How the MHAA is expected to be involved in the project (grants, loans, tax credits).
 - ✎ Standards for Certified Heritage Structures, if tax credits are anticipated.
 - ✎ Responses to referrals made to public agencies.
 - ✎ Whether the proposed amendment(s) is in harmony with the remainder of the management plan for the Heritage Area.
- ✎ The action shall be carried out by means of a joint County Council/County Executive signature letter.
- ✎ The joint signature letter and a copy of the approved amendments shall be transmitted to MHAA.

A number of potential non-area-wide heritage tourism projects are proposed under the MHAA TIZ provision. These projects are organized into three categories.

The first category consists of those projects that are ready for immediate implementation:

- ✎ Completion of the Bladensburg Waterfront Park to include a wetlands boardwalk, a paddle boat and canoe facility, enhanced entranceway, canoe access points, and a pedestrian bridge over the Anacostia.
- ✎ Construction of North Gate Park.
- ✎ Development of a marketing strategy for Greenbelt's Roosevelt Center.
- ✎ Design and installation of a distinctive feature on the Dueling Grounds at Colmar Manor.
- ✎ Renovation of LaSalle Hall at Ammendale for adaptive use as a day care center.

The second category consists of projects that are considered short-term:

- ✎ Construction of a museum in North Brentwood.
- ✎ Conversion of the vacant Roy Rogers in Bladensburg into a visitor center.

- ✿ Enhancement of Riversdale and its grounds.
- ✿ Provision of amenities to the Anacostia Tributary Trails System.
- ✿ Conversion of a 1930s filling station on Rhode Island Avenue into a visitor center.
- ✿ Development of a miniature golf course in Hyattsville based upon transportation themes.
- ✿ Restoration of Bostwick in Bladensburg.
- ✿ Continued improvements at Ammendale.

The third category consists of long-term projects:

- ✿ Establishment of a Muppet Museum.
- ✿ Design and construction of commercial development adjacent to the Bladensburg Waterfront Park.
- ✿ Improvement of access to the Dueling Grounds.
- ✿ Construction of an outdoor amphitheater along the Anacostia River.
- ✿ Restoration and interpretation of the Free Hope Baptist Church in Bladensburg.
- ✿ Construction of a working replica of the Cottage City mill.
- ✿ Development of interpretive exhibits that show Hyattsville's telegraph and transportation role in the history of the nation's communications.

In addition to the above, the lower US 1 corridor has been identified as a potential arts district with corresponding tourism potential. The M-NCPPC is undertaking a planning study of the potential arts district. It is anticipated that this study will suggest further tourism-related projects in ATHA. A number of other projects are under consideration that may have a relationship to heritage tourism.

Critical to the success of ATHA is an investment in coordinated, well-researched and effective marketing and promotion. The management entity will develop a detailed marketing and promotional strategy on a project/program basis.

The heritage tourism program in ATHA will be managed by the Redevelopment Authority of Prince George's County. Management of the heritage tourism program within the City of Laurel will be coordinated in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Laurel, ATHA, Inc., and the Redevelopment Authority of Prince George's County. ATHA, Inc., and Prince George's County will continue their partnership effort. ATHA Inc., will serve in a special advisory and advocacy capacity to the Redevelopment Authority. Each management entity will have the following responsibilities within its jurisdiction with regard to the heritage tourism program.



Downtown Mount Rainier exhibits interesting early commercial architecture, such as this five-part 1920s commercial/residential building on 34th Street.

The Redevelopment Authority will have the following responsibilities with regard to the heritage tourism program:

- ✿ Development of an annual heritage tourism work program based upon this plan that outlines which of the projects in the plan will be undertaken each year.
- ✿ Management of the heritage tourism work program.
- ✿ Development and implementation of marketing, promotion and branding strategies for the heritage tourism program to be undertaken on a project-by-project basis.
- ✿ Consultation on management plan issues with municipalities, the Board and citizen organizations.
- ✿ Coordination with the above-mentioned county, municipal, regional, state and federal agencies that own or are responsible for public facilities related to heritage tourism in carrying out the phased projects.
- ✿ Development and implementation of a reporting process to the County Executive, County Council and MHAA.
- ✿ Making application to MHAA for grants and loans for qualified projects including an identification of the source of needed matching funds.
- ✿ Acting as the contact for state agencies in ensuring that state activities are consistent with the management plan and will not have an adverse effect on Certified Heritage Area resources.

This plan is designed to stimulate public vision and enthusiasm and to encourage greater interpretation, stewardship, linkages, and economic development through heritage tourism. Upon certification by MHAA, ATHA will join the Maryland system of heritage areas that reflects the cultural themes of the state's development and provides educational, inspirational, economic, and recreational benefits for present and future generations.