



Chapter One *The Anacostia Trails Heritage Area*

INTRODUCTION

This management plan describes the heritage tourism program for a special area of northern Prince George's County known as the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA). The name is derived from the Anacostia River watershed and associated recreational greenway that exists in much of the area.

This area has been targeted for a new state program to invest in heritage areas. It was selected because of its interesting history, with many well-developed interpretive sites and intact historic resources reflecting the area's more than 300 years of settlement; because of its beautiful urban greenway, the Anacostia Tributary Trails System; and because of its extensive green spaces beyond the Beltway and along the Patuxent River. As this management plan explains, ATHA has the potential to become a new tourist destination and gateway to Washington, D.C.

This chapter provides information on the concept of heritage areas, the state's Heritage Area program, Heritage Area partners, and the formation of ATHA. It begins with the desired results in the form of a vision crafted in the process of creating this management plan and describes the basic demographics of ATHA.

VISION AND GOALS FOR THE ANACOSTIA TRAILS HERITAGE AREA

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.

The following goals were adopted by the Prince George's County Council as part of the Goals, Concepts and Guidelines that are a basis for this

plan, as stipulated in Article 28 of the Annotated Code of Maryland and in the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance:

- ✿ 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 ATHA in support of heritage tourism.
- ✿ Preserve and enhance Historic Sites and cultural resources in ATHA.
- ✿ Expand and enhance linkages among heritage attractions throughout ATHA.
- ✿ Expand existing partnerships and create new opportunities for partnerships to achieve the goals of ATHA.
- ✿ Promote development of the arts in ATHA.
- ✿ 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.

All of these goals underline the strategies set forth in this plan and are the basis for the actions and projects recommended as elements of these strategies.

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE ANACOSTIA TRAILS HERITAGE AREA

The Anacostia Trails Heritage Area is a territory of some 83.7 square miles, encompassing 14 municipalities as well as many neighborhoods in the unincorporated portions of the county. The federal, state and local governments own 38 percent of the land in ATHA. It is bounded on three sides by the county border and on the east by the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and federal property. (See Map 1.)

Approximately 300,000 people live in this area, about half of them “inside the Beltway,” as the area inside the Capital Beltway is known. This number is unchanged since 1990 and is anticipated to remain stable or decrease slightly over the next five years.

There are more than 110,000 households in the Heritage Area, averaging 2.6 persons per household. (Two-thirds of the elderly here live in families.) The median household income is \$47,155, and more than 80 percent of all residents have graduated from high school. A third of the population has completed at least two years of college; more than 10 percent of the population possess graduate degrees.

Much of the housing stock predates 1950, and commercial areas, equally old, are underutilized, in part the product of a population smaller now than in the years these areas thrived. Half of the households are renting and the other half live in owner-occupied housing. More than 80 percent of the owner-occupied houses of the area are valued between \$75,000 and \$199,000; of these, 43 percent are valued between \$100,000 and \$149,000.

THE HERITAGE AREA CONCEPT

Maryland has established a new state program to identify special places, called Heritage Areas, where additional state resources are to be devoted to preserving history and natural and cultural resources in those areas and to developing programs to encourage tourists to visit.

“Heritage tourists,” who enjoy visiting authentic places to learn about the unique stories to be found there, are part of a growing market of tourists. By organizing to meet the demands of this market, communities can diversify their economies—taking advantage of the phenomenal growth in tourism projected for the United States, including international visitors—and further justify public investments in programs that improve the quality of life of their residents while also encouraging tourism.

The Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program is part of a larger movement across the nation to preserve and promote unique regions, sometimes called heritage corridors or heritage regions. Some of these are nationally recognized by the United States Congress, such as the Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor in eastern Pennsylvania; others are self-identified, like Tracks Across Wyoming, the southern tier of the state united by the old Union Pacific rail line. A few, like ATHA, participate in state programs designed to capture a larger share of the heritage tourism market.

Heritage areas may be large, like the examples cited above, with multiple counties within them, or small, like ATHA, which is less than one county in size. They typically display a wide range of heritage resources—historic, natural and cultural—and illustrate aspects of the nation’s development. They employ a system of interpretation, physical linkages and visitor services to showcase the entire region. Unlike national parks, these are living landscapes where people live, work, worship and play—and where they are willing to share their communities with interested visitors whose dollars can help to sustain the local economy. The idea was first developed more than 25 years ago in France, where the national system is a deliberate attempt to spread tourism across the entire country, rather than rely on traditional tourism “hot spots.”

THE MARYLAND HERITAGE AREAS AUTHORITY

In 1996, the Maryland General Assembly passed House Bill 1 (HB 1), creating the Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program, to be administered by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA). The 17 members of MHAA are appointed by the governor and comprise:

- ✿ Seven leading state agency officials:
 - ❖ Secretary of Housing and Community Development, serving as chair
 - ❖ Secretary of Business and Economic Development
 - ❖ Secretary of Transportation
 - ❖ Secretary of Natural Resources
 - ❖ Secretary of Higher Education
 - ❖ Director of the Office of Planning
 - ❖ State Historic Preservation Officer
- ✿ Six elected officials (two each from local jurisdictions, the Maryland Senate and the Maryland House of Delegates)
- ✿ Four members from the public:
 - ❖ One from the Maryland Greenways Commission
 - ❖ One from the Maryland Tourism Development Board
 - ❖ Two with expertise in historic preservation and heritage tourism as required by the legislation

Currently one member of MHAA is also a member of the Greenbelt City Council, one of the municipalities within the Heritage Area. Staff to the authority is provided through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development by the Maryland Historical Trust, whose director, the State Historic Preservation Officer, is one of the seven state agency members.

Besides MHAA's power to recognize and certify heritage areas (recognition is the first step and enables a grant for planning to accomplish the second step, that of certification), MHAA has three principal tools to accomplish its mission to assist in the development of Heritage Areas. Using its MHAA Financing Fund, MHAA may make matching grants and loans for "planning, design, property acquisition, development, preservation, restoration, interpretation, marketing and programming." The fund receives \$1 million annually for matching grant purposes from Maryland's Program Open Space, which acts as an endowment that receives interest and carries forward the funds from fiscal year to fiscal year until spent. Matching loans to provide financial assistance for or otherwise support a

Certified Heritage Area may be made from the proceeds of revenue bonds deposited in the fund. Presently up to \$15,000,000 in revenue bonds are authorized. Also, MHAA may extend state income tax credits for the rehabilitation of certified heritage structures, which may not otherwise qualify for such credits under the state's model program supporting rehabilitation of historic structures.

With state certification, ATHA will have access to these MHAA programs. In addition, MHAA and the state's tourism program will aid in marketing this Heritage Area to visitors. And, finally, there are the intangible benefits: building community pride in the significant accomplishment and public recognition that this management plan represents; promoting more community investment in quality-of-life concerns; and creating new ways for the area's communities to work together for the benefit of all.

State Requirements for Certification

In order to become certified as a heritage area, the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Management Plan must address specific topics. These requirements are identified as a means for the successful implementation of the terms described in HB 1 (1996). (Requirements are described in the informational brochure produced by the Maryland Historical Trust, entitled *The Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program*.) A short description of the topics and identification of the chapter(s) in which these areas are addressed are provided below:

- ✿ *Vision and Goals*—Heritage area vision statement, a description of the desired conditions that will prevail and goals for achieving the vision (Chapter One).
- ✿ *Significance*—Statement of what makes this area different from other areas of Maryland and what the visitor can learn and experience here and nowhere else (Chapter Two).
- ✿ *Strategies for Achieving Optimum Visitation*—Analysis of the tourism and visitation issues to be addressed and the strategies to be employed to optimize visitor experience and spending (Chapter Three).
- ✿ *Interpretation*—Descriptions of the interpretive topics, heritage resources and potential improvements for interpretation programming (Chapter Four).
- ✿ *Strategies for Enhancing Heritage Resources*—Descriptions of the actions and ideas to be undertaken by the management entity and its partners for the development of the heritage area (Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven).
- ✿ *Stewardship Strategies*—Descriptions of actions to be undertaken in order to improve the curatorship, preservation, conservation, maintenance and improvement of the built, natural and cultural landscapes of the heritage area (Chapter Five).

- ❁ *Strategies for Linkages*—Descriptions of actions needed to improve connectivity throughout the heritage area (Chapter Six).
- ❁ *Strategies for Encouraging Compatible Economic Development*—Descriptions of issues and actions to be undertaken to foster heritage-compatible development, including development in downtowns and other historic areas that enhance, rather than detract from, the character and condition of historic resources (Chapter Seven).
- ❁ *Leadership and Organization*—Description of the management entity for the heritage area and its structure, roles and responsibilities, plus a discussion of the roles of partners (Chapter Seven).

These and other requirements of MHAA have structured the planning process and this document. In order for ATHA to take full advantage of the state’s programs, this plan must first be adopted by the jurisdictions responsible for local planning in this area, Prince George’s County and the City of Laurel, which prepares its own master plans. Once adopted locally, it must be approved by MHAA.

Relationship to Local Planning

The *General Plan* is the primary official public policy document guiding Prince George’s County’s physical development. The plan contains goals, concepts, guidelines and proposals for the following five elements: Environment and Energy, Land Use and Economic Development, Housing and Neighborhoods, Transportation and Public Facilities, and Utilities.

The *General Plan* does not offer detailed recommendations concerning specific parcels of land or public facilities. This occurs at the next level of planning: area master plans, small area plans, and functional plans. The recommendations contained in these plans must be consistent with the policy guidelines set forth by the *General Plan*. These plans are amendments to the *General Plan*.

Area master plans provide specific recommendations on the environment, historic preservation, living areas and housing, commercial areas, employment areas, urban design, circulation and transportation (including highways and mass transit), and public facilities.

There are also a number of plans that comprehensively cover a specific topic for the entire county. These are referred to as functional plans. There are functional plans for transportation, historic resources, parks and recreation, trails, schools, and public safety. The Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Management Plan will become one of Prince George’s County’s functional plans. The County Council must approve all plans.

The City of Laurel Master Plan sets forth recommendations for the future development and growth of the city. Specific recommendations are made for the many elements integral to the functioning of the city,

including land use proposals, transportation concerns, capital improvements and the physical and living environments. The focus of the document is to provide a long-range plan for the retention of the traditional characteristics of Laurel with the integration of future land use development.

As an adjunct to the City of Laurel Master Plan, the ATHA management plan will provide a framework for the implementation of the goals and objectives set forth in the plan.

Relationship to the State Planning Act

The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act was enacted in 1992 to establish consistent general land use policies to be implemented locally throughout the state. These policies are stated as the following eight visions:

1. “Development is concentrated in suitable areas.”
2. “Sensitive areas are protected.”
3. “In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected.”
4. “Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic.”
5. “Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced.”
6. “To assure the achievement of 1 through 5 above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined.”
7. “Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the county or municipal corporation are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur.”
8. “Funding mechanisms are addressed to achieve these visions.”

These visions have been adopted as official state policy. The eight visions constitute a comprehensive set of guiding principles that describe how and where growth and development should occur and also call for a land and water stewardship ethic to guide individual and group action. The Management Plan for the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area seeks to implement Visions 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8 of the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act. Visions 1, 3 and 7 are not germane to the purpose of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Management Plan because it is not a plan that is intended to guide the county’s growth.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANACOSTIA TRAILS HERITAGE AREA

The initiators of the project that resulted in today's recognized Heritage Area were representatives of municipalities (including Laurel) and neighborhoods in northern Prince George's County who joined together in 1996 to form the informal Anacostia Heritage Area Partnership. These leaders acted in response to the passage of HB-1-1996 by the Maryland legislature, which laid out the Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program and designated MHAA as a new, lead agency for the program. MHAA recognized the Heritage Area in January 1998 on the basis of an application submitted by the partnership in the preceding year. This recognition enabled the partnership to apply for a state matching grant to support the development of this plan.

Prince George's Heritage, Inc. (PGH), the primary preservation non-profit organization in the county, with the support of the county, municipalities and numerous other partners, became the recipient and administrator of the grant from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. The partnership was enhanced by the establishment of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Board, an informal committee formed to supervise the planning process. The Anacostia Trails Heritage Board and Prince George's Heritage, Inc., successfully applied for state recognition as a Heritage Area. Prince George's Heritage further secured a management planning grant that was matched by the municipalities, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), the Prince George's County government, and private organizations. Subsequently, the Anacostia Trails Heritage Board became the core of Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, Inc. (ATHA, Inc.), a community-based organization representing the interests of 14 municipalities, unincorporated areas of northern Prince George's County and representatives of preservation, environmental, institutional, tourism and business organizations.

THE MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

The management planning process began in December 1998, when PGH hired an executive director for the project and contracted with the consulting team assembled by John Milner Associates, Inc., of Bladensburg. On January 28, 1999, the Prince George's County Council granted permission to initiate the planning process pursuant to the MHAA requirement that the Heritage Area management plan be an amendment to the county's *General Plan*. In order to amend the *General Plan*, Section 27-642 of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance requires that a process of public participation be created. This process included the production of an informational brochure and a public forum designed to elicit public comment. In addition to the required public meetings, ATHA leaders sponsored two public visioning workshops, held on February 17 and 27, 1999; the public forum was held on April 20, 1999.

Another component of the county process was the approval of goals, concepts, guidelines, and a public participation program by the County Council on June 3, 1999. ATHA leaders conducted a public presentation of ideas and issues in July 1999, and a public workshop was held in November 1999. In addition, there have been ongoing, monthly meetings of four key planning subcommittees drawn from members of the Heritage Board, the Technical Advisory Committee (a group comprising representatives of key government agencies and interest groups), and interested residents. The subcommittees addressed economic development and tourism, interpretation and education, stewardship, and transportation and linkages. Other committees addressed public outreach and events. In May and August 1999, ATHA leaders held two major progress reviews with the consulting team and project participants to guide key decisions. Part of the public participation process included the publishing of newsletters in English and Spanish. Numerous elected municipal officials and appointed governmental staff have personally attended meetings of the Heritage Board, the Technical Advisory Committee, and various other events.

PARTNERS IN THE ANACOSTIA TRAILS HERITAGE AREA

The partners in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area have become involved because they are interested in tourism and economic development, or historic preservation, or recreation and open space conservation, or the arts, or public education about the history and environment of this special place. Currently, the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area enjoys the participation of many partners: citizens groups, organizations, government agencies, and private companies.

Private Partners

A wide variety of business owners and nonprofit citizen organizations, including long-time civic and business groups in the area, neighborhood activists, and supporters of the arts, are important to accomplishing the strategies discussed in this plan. Business leaders in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area are vital in aiding the enhancement of commercial areas.

Public Partners

Prince George's County

The Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources oversees such activities as stream restoration and enforcement of building codes. Independent quasi-governmental bodies with roles to play in implementing this management plan include the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation and the Prince George's County Conference and Visitors Bureau (which receive governmental funds and are governed by political appointees but which function as nonprofit entities). The Redevelopment Authority of Prince George's County will manage the county's heritage tourism program.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

The planning and zoning responsibilities of M-NCPPC include preparing comprehensive and functional plans and comprehensive rezoning maps for County Council approval; advising the County Council on proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations; and reviewing and approving site plans and offering recommendations to the County Council on zoning map amendments and special exception applications. M-NCPPC is the final authority in administering the Subdivision Regulations. In addition, the M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation acquires, develops, operates and maintains the public park system and operates the county's public recreation programs. M-NCPPC also owns and operates several of the major tourism attractions in the Heritage Area. In Prince George's County, these responsibilities are assumed by the Prince George's County Planning Board.

Municipalities

All 14 municipalities within the Heritage Area, whatever their status, large and small, are critical partners. During the planning process, their elected officials and their staffs have participated in both the Technical Advisory Committee and the Heritage Board; the municipalities made direct contributions to the budget for the plan.

There are also unincorporated areas outside the municipalities, each of which has added its residents' voices in support of the vision of this plan.

City of Laurel

Historic preservation within the City of Laurel's seven historic districts is coordinated by the city's Historic District Commission. Zoning and permitting authority within the city limits are the responsibility of the Department of Development Management. Grants and development initiatives are coordinated by the City Administrator. Additionally, the city Department of Parks and Recreation acquires, develops, operates and maintains the city's green infrastructure and coordinates recreation facilities and activities to meet the needs of the city's residents.

State Partners

The primary state agencies with roles to play in stewardship include the MHAA, through its staff from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, Division of Historical and Cultural Programs. The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) is the principal operating unit within the Division of Historical and Cultural Programs. MHT has programs independent of MHAA that also provide important funding and technical support. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) are sources of support for natural resources and stream protection. The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) is the state's lead agency for the Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Act, which guides resources to Priority Funding Areas and Designated Neighborhoods—designations that affect much of the Heritage Area. The State Highway

Administration owns and maintains all state highways in the Heritage Area, including US 1.

Federal Partners

There are also key federal partners that operate larger properties within the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, attracting thousands of visitors each year: NASA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Park Service, and National Archives and Records Administration at its Archives II facility in College Park. A number of these partners have hosted meetings and contributed to the planning process.

ABOUT THIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Here is what the reader will find in the remainder of this plan:

- ✿ Chapter Two discusses the area's history, significance and resources. This key discussion provides the basis for interpretive themes and programs described in Chapter Four.
- ✿ Chapter Three examines existing tourism and visitor services in Prince George's County and suggests strategies for improvement that meet the needs of the heritage tourist.
- ✿ Chapter Four describes existing interpretive resources in ATHA and sets forth a strategy to create a coordinated interpretive system, relying primarily on existing resources for both interpretation and visitor orientation.
- ✿ Chapter Five examines stewardship in ATHA and sets forth strategies for improving community design (especially in the US 1 corridor), preserving historic resources, improving the environmental resources, and boosting the arts and cultural traditions.
- ✿ Chapter Six sets out a strategy for physical and interpretive linkages throughout the area, addressing multiuse recreational trails, interpretive driving and bicycling tours, visitor reception and wayfinding, waterways, and public transit and special transport, among other issues.
- ✿ Chapter Seven discusses implementation of the plan through area-wide projects and Target Investment Zone projects, and discusses standards for Certified Heritage Structures. It also outlines the management structure for ATHA.