

2010



Cultural Heritage Tourism Conference

***Sustainable Tourism Planning and
Development Laboratory***

*175 Main Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860 USA*

*Wednesday, October 27, 2010
8:00 – 12:00 pm*

www.sustainabletourismplanning.com

Cultural Heritage Tourism Conference

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Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory

Introduction

The Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory offers three teaching and learning conferences each year. Each conference focuses on the aspects of Sustainable Tourism. The Laboratory is an outgrowth of the 25 years of work of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, a not-for-profit organization working to improve the quality of life of its residents by preserving, protecting and promoting their natural and cultural resources.

The Blackstone Valley is the Birthplace of the America's industrial Revolution. It played a seminal role in transforming the landscape from 18th century farmlands to urban factories. However, after 150 years of economic success the river and land that was home to more than a thousand factories became fouled. The factories moved south for better prospects. This migration left the region economically void thus affecting the vibrancy of the community. Today the Tourism Council is working to restore and regenerate the landscape that was long neglected by its community and the state at large. For the past 5 years the Tourism Council has embarked on a mission of sharing their experiences with other communities hence the launch of the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory.



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Program

On October 27, 2010, the Lab hosted a Cultural Heritage Tourism Conference. The event attracted community planners, historical sites, preservation society, Convention Visitors Bureaus and students from Johnson & Wales University, Bristol Community College, Boston University and Brown University. Dr. Robert Billington, President of the Laboratory gave the opening remarks. In his remarks Dr. Billington noted that the speaker Cheryl Hargrove has over twenty-five years experience in historical preservation. She has worked closely with local, regional and she brought cultural tourism to the national level. Dr. Billington also pointed out that this event would allow tourism practitioners to learn how to integrate culture heritage as a strategy of building whole places. He stated that visitors are looking for unique and authentic places so destinations should tap into this growing market.

Ms. Hargrove is the president of Hargrove International and specializes in heritage, tourism and marketing communications. In her keynote Ms. Hargrove stated that cultural heritage is one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism sector. She noted that people do stay longer when they experience the history and culture of a place. She further said that immersion and participation is the current trend of tourism so cultural tourism comes in handy to meet this need. Ms. Hargrove informed the audience that Cultural Heritage was not recognized in US "travel activities" until 1995 although destinations had focused on these assets for centuries. She encouraged destinations to tap into this emerging market because of its benefits that she spelt out below. One third of all international visitors to the US engage in cultural activities. Many historical sites and cultural attractions are inexpensive to visit, and demand for an authentic experience is rising among high-valued visitors. To view Ms. Hargrove's entire presentation, please visit www.sustainabletourism.org.

Process

Robert Leaver led the second portion of the workshop. He applied the "café style", a learning process that allows participants to interact so as to build ideas that shape the vision of a destination. The discussions revolved around the keynote speaker's presentation. Mr. Leaver assigned each group pre-determined questions to address. At the end of the conference each group shared their "nuggets" to the entire group.

The Conference Goals

- To learn the benefits of Cultural Heritage Tourism Development that make sites and programs come alive.
- To add value to your program by focusing on quality and authenticity.
- To enhance the visitor's experience by preserving and protecting the resources.
- To find a fit between a community and tourism.
- To discover how Cultural Heritage Tourism promotes a community's identity.

Learning Café Discussion

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Topic 1

External conditions analysis: What immediate conditions are present and the impact is fully felt? What are the emergent conditions – those on the horizon with a projected impact? With each condition state either the adverse or affirming impact on the tourist?

- A Congressional Representative should lead the Cultural Heritage initiative.
- Federal, State and Local governments do not see value in the tourism industry or with tourism professionals.
- Low budget, no national campaign, and there is lack of understanding of tourism value.
- Step-up the national tourism program. The industry needs the leadership on a national level
- Educating politicians on the importance of historic preservation and heritage tourism as a major economic generator.
- Cuts in funding for tourism and education are leading to lack of student interest/feeling of connection with their own history of communities and places



Possible Solutions:

- ✚ Promote local/domestic school travel and community service programs that bring students to new places and introduce them to new parts of American history – this could lead to more getting involved.
- ✚ Have visitors post their experiences
- ✚ Stories of experiences are powerful – helps bring in new people as well as bringing people back
- ✚ Personal recommendations as part of a trusted source

Learning Café Discussion

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Topic 2

In a whole place tourism experience, what will visitors require from it? Amplify known expectations and add new requests from tourists that may become new requirements.

- Build for locals first; keep it edgy by instilling a sense of “place” pride.
- Promote authenticity; warts and all, no make-up.
- Invite visitors to leave the place better
- Package themed experiences and create custom itineraries.
- What we love is fine food, shopping, theater/arts, historic building and natural beauty.
- Internal awareness, “we don’t appreciate what we have”.
- What we hate: the economy, the weather, infrastructure lacking in terms of integrated community or place.
- Capitalize on spending trends: local, handmade, sustainable, food, experiences, consumer goods
- Requires the marketing and packaging of the destination – why they should buy into it, engaging locals in activities that would reap from the benefits.
- Visitors need efficient public transit and transportation infrastructure! It needs to be easy to get from the airport to city centers.



Learning Café Discussion

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Topic 3

What is your vision for a whole place as a destination that will create sustainable tourism success?

- Stakeholders should all work together for instance; government leaders need to understand not just tourism but sustainable tourism.
- Integrate transportation partnerships between farm, historical buildings and land trust.
- New Bedford could offer a fishing experience with local fishermen
- Community interest/pride/participation is vital to creating a vibrant environment that is appealing to tourists from near and far
- Engage the locals in what makes them and their place unique and authentic. Local interest is necessary for sustainability and stewardship
- Whole-place tourism requires a sustainable model that promotes the local/historical/community/arts and culture/environmental aspects of a place – need to engage not only visitors, but also local residents since it's often their tax dollars paying for it
 - Need input and buy-in from the local community
- Preserving the destination for sustainability
- Getting the local perspective on what to visit, what to eat, etc. will really create a “whole place” experience. Everyone wants to know where the locals go and what they enjoy
- Places should be authentic and livable for residents first and foremost, then a destination



Learning Café Discussion

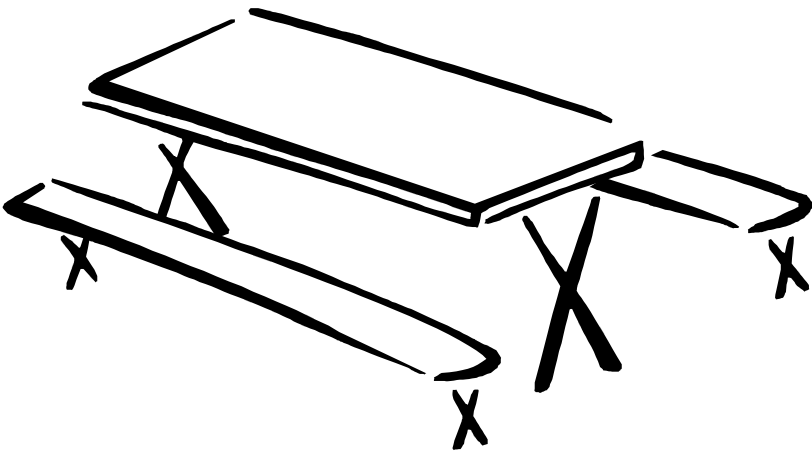
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Topic 4

Based on changing external conditions, visitor expectations and a vision for a whole place, what must tourism surveyors **Keep doing? Stop doing? Do differently? Start doing?**

- Tourism shares and educates local vendors on what will sell to high-end tourists.
- Think about your audience
- Visitors expectation vs. residents
 - Do we need to change locals' perception about tourist?
 - Doing more to thank the locals
 - Awareness campaign to internal and external "Goodhousekeeping" sent of approval.
- Discounted membership for locals ("local level")
- Small efforts to promote the community
- Promote positive economic impact of hospitality/tourism.
- Technology is a cultural part of the Eco/cultural Tourism scene/WEB. Development smart phone APP? Transit programs aimed at tourism increase in convenience tourism purveyors need to be aware of connectivity. Smart Card Technology.
- Celebrate Quirkiness! Ethnic interests, swamp Yankees, Italian, Portuguese Azores, and French.
- Tourism surveyors should tie quality of life to economic development and have a return on investment.
- Historic places and recreation need to talk to each other.



Learning Café Discussion

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Topic 5

In making the vision happen, declare which sustainable tourism elements will have to better work together? And on what – be specific? Map and describe the connectivity on the paper tablecloths.

- Social Media integrated by sharing the visitor's experience "You Tube".
- Aspects of generational marketing appeal for all age of visitors economic spectrum marketing
- Have colleges offer cultural tourism classes
- Offer local tourism marketing courses in universities
- Make sure all age groups and economic levels know they are appreciated.
- Global travel creates greater awareness and appreciation for one's own place in the United States.
- Tourists have to buy something to make locations sustainable.
- Lodging and Destinations have to collaborate with transport modes.



Learning Café Discussion

-Nuggets-

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Build the place for yourself

- Put the local community and people first – visitors 2nd – local people need to be happy in order to be ambassadors of where they live.
- Have local people promote what is there using their knowledge.
- Develop/build/support backing of the local population – need to get the people in the community and front-line workers enthusiastic about their place because they are usually the first and last people that the tourists see.
- Do more to be sensitive to local residents. Listen, say thank you, develop deeper partnerships, and be ambassadors to each other

Value the local assets

- Promote advocacy training on multiple levels. People need to understand the value of our cultural assets and institutions and support them.
- Promote the positive impacts of tourism while working to minimize/eliminate the negative impacts.

Feature what is authentic and quirky

- Authenticity is key- “warts and all” and “no makeup”
- See inside truth to outside world – be authentic
- Find out what is unique about your area and market that uniqueness. Sometimes you don’t realize a cultural asset because it’s part of your everyday life. Use new technologies or methods to communicate with tourists; market to the local population as well.
- Celebrate quiriness, food, diverse ethnicity, local culture, and history.
- Managing authenticity of a place is important.

Develop centers of tourist interest broadly across the state

- Green spaces, agriculture, and marine activity.
- Tourist curiosity generating visitor investment.

Work across borders

- Crossing borders by developing tours with our neighboring states, i.e. culinary tourism
- Cross pollinating state tourism websites.
- It’s crucial that we work in partnerships, within and outside of our city, to forge new alliances. This would give visitors a “buffet” of options to consider for places to visit and experience.

Communicate through social media

- We need to take advantage of social media as a tool to attract and retain visitors and keep up with technology/trends
- “Getting our place on the radar” through sharing stories of experiences (posting online/blogs), through online presence (searchable, link to partners), through promoting visitations of local/regional/domestic sites by students/school groups since this can lead to continued and further visitations, interests, and engagements.

Tap into colleges

- Encourage courses on cultural tourism in all universities and colleges.
- New England needs to tap into student demographic – guide books for New England, focus on weekend trips, low cost lodging and eating, and night life ideas. Promote cultural sites and destinations to every student in every grade, not just incoming freshmen. Have campus oriented publications or website dedicated to promoting cultural events.

Learning Café Discussion

-Nuggets Cont'd...-

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Understand multiple audiences

- Think about your audience(s) as you market your message (there is more than one!)
- Appeal to all aspects of the economy – economic spectrum marketing.

Collaborate with all partners

- Work with/build partnerships with local groups.
- Prioritize on tourism promotion for the local population – getting the locals involved, marketing and packaging of products to include partnerships with other players in the industry. Create a shared vision by connecting all the dots that comprise the tourism components and what role each plays. Use fairs, exhibitions, and festivals, annually if possible, to showcase New England's attractions – training and advocacy are a must.
- We need collaboration between all stakeholders (government, communities, business)
- We need to get together and have a roundtable discussion
- (business/government) to create a vision for our area, who we are, what we want to promote, where we need to go in order to increase awareness for the future.
- Lodging and destinations – collaborating with transportation modes such as public transit, biking, watercrafts, and smartcard systems.

Do placed-based evaluation

- Place-based evaluation by visitors by using a social media website – “Kodak moment” becomes the “YouTube moment”.
- ROI – what's our business plan? Connecting quality of life investment to economic development.

What are we waiting for?

- Need national tourism entity now – disconnect between government and tourism industry (no respect).



Conclusion

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Conclusion

The event wrapped-up by emphasizing that the power of places comes from the historical, cultural and natural assets of a destination. Festivals and events are motivational opportunities for visitors who want to have a unique experience hence contributing to the Cultural Heritage Tourism of a place.



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