



A Guide for Becoming a Heritage Destination Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area



Schuylkill River Heritage Towns & Tours Program

Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area
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Pottstown, PA 19464

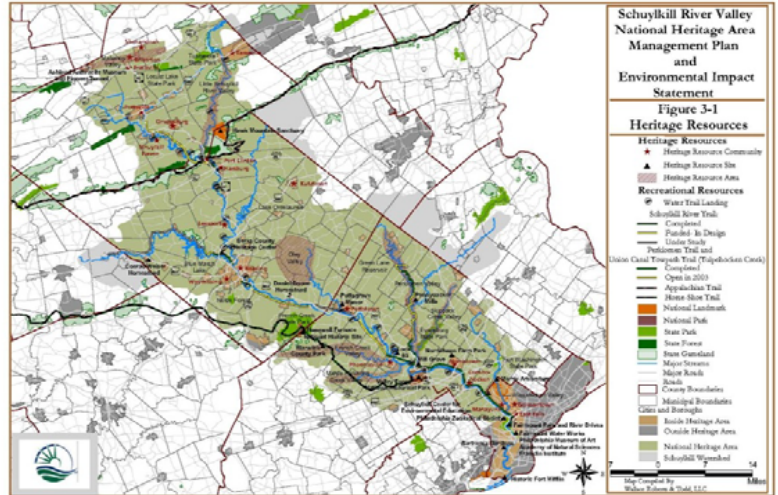
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Schuylkill River Heritage Towns & Tours

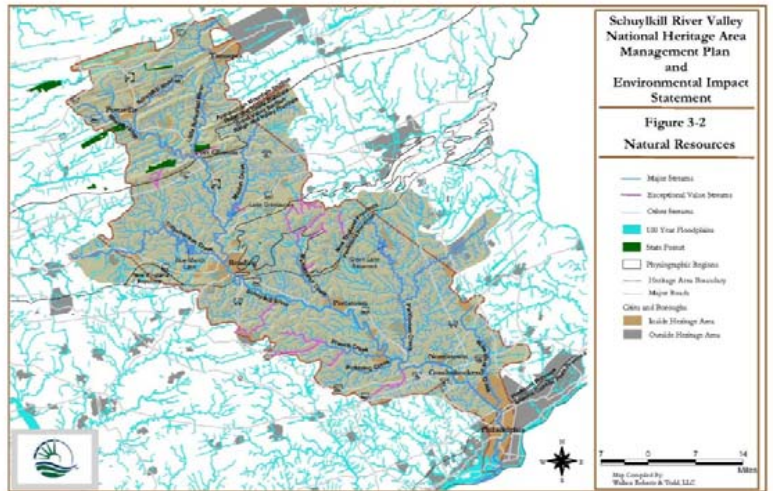
WHAT ARE HERITAGE RESOURCES AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Heritage Resources are the unique places, attractions, and stories that make up the community's identity. Examples are historic buildings and remnants, parks, and the Schuylkill River Trail. They are important because they provide tangible social and economic benefits that can contribute to an improved quality of life. These resources are valuable commodities because, through visitation, they are capable of bringing dollars into your local community and into our region.



THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Cultural and heritage tourism can improve your local community. Entrepreneurs may rehabilitate their buildings in residential areas and downtowns, and food services such as restaurants and diners may be re-established. For the community it's aesthetic improvements, higher property values, revitalized areas, more social interaction and pride. For families, its attractions such as parks, theatres, museums, and trails to visit. Just one great restaurant with the right food and marketing can be a great asset to bringing visitors into town.



WHY IS BECOMING A HERITAGE DESTINATION SO IMPORTANT?

A big part of becoming a Heritage Destination is being aware of how your community's historic and cultural assets can draw visitors. Tourism is one of the most important aspects of heritage preservation as well because it means *direct dollars* for your local community. Preserved historic buildings and landscapes, events, things to do, and special neighborhoods attract tourists. What visitors want is the sense of being in a "place," not just "any place."



Schuylkill River Heritage Towns & Tours

Toolkit Overview

WHY ARE WE DEVELOPING A HERITAGE TOWNS & TOURS TOOLKIT?

Concerted and coordinated action at all levels including grassroots citizen groups, businesses, regional heritage organizations, and local, state, and federal government is needed to fully realize the Schuylkill River Heritage Area's (SRHA) vast potential and to maximize economic benefits. The *Schuylkill River Heritage Area Towns & Tours Toolkit* (HT&T Toolkit) will be used for building on the advancements made in the region and on the accomplishments of the many individuals and groups already working to preserve and enhance the Schuylkill River's cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational resources. *The end result will be a truly revitalized and restored Schuylkill River region with an enhanced tourism infrastructure and economy for everyone.*

WHAT IS THE TOOLKIT?

The HT&T Toolkit was developed to assist communities in the region. The Toolkit contains a "self-evaluation" process, which can be used to turn a community into a Heritage Destination. *The purpose is to benefit local economies and enhance the quality of life in the respective communities that participate in this program through enhanced partnerships, coordinated marketing, project development, technical assistance, and grants and loans.* It is a "how to" guidance manual that:

- ◆ Provides access to grant assistance from the SRHA for developing a Heritage Action Plan;
- ◆ Provides guidance to implement projects and improve heritage tourism infrastructure; and
- ◆ Utilizes a process, as defined in the Toolkit, to strengthen public and private partnerships to develop individualized and successful heritage programs.

The Toolkit is to assist communities in becoming a Heritage Destination by diversifying and developing their heritage and cultural tourism offerings and attractions to enhance character, increase visitation and visitor spending, and improve the local economy.

The Toolkit will assist communities within the SRHA to develop and utilize their assets and resources to derive local economic benefits while also sustaining and enhancing heritage resources. This includes physical assets such as historical and cultural sites and structures and their road, trail, and canal linkages. It also includes non-physical aspects such as interpretive themes - how the story is told - as well as partnerships and the many people and groups that make things happen.



Schuylkill River Heritage Towns & Tours

Grant Program

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM?

The **Heritage Towns and Tours Grant Program** is to further link cultural heritage and recreational tourism development and in the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area (SRHA). Heritage tourism is defined as inviting travelers to experience the historic, cultural, natural, and recreational resources of a place or community. Travel enables the tourist to learn about, and be surrounded by, authentic local customs, traditions, sites, structures, and stories of historic and cultural importance. The purpose of this Program is to assist communities in the SRHA to diversify and develop heritage and cultural tourism offerings and attractions that enhance the character of communities, link to the Schuylkill River Trail and Water Trail, increase visitation and visitor spending, and help improve the economy of program participants.

WHO'S ELIGIBLE FOR GRANT ASSISTANCE?

This grant program is available to non-profit organizations, cultural organizations, community business associations, recreational organizations as well as counties, cities, towns, townships and boroughs located within the SRHA. Partnerships are encouraged.

WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

Successful Partnership Applications will receive support through this program of up to \$2,000 to create the Heritage Action Plan using the SRHA Heritage Towns and Tours Toolkit to develop their grant applications. Implementation of the Heritage Action Plan will be supported by SRHA staff and PJA, the Heritage Towns & Tours Toolkit consultants. The cost of support from PJA will not exceed \$5,000 per Heritage Action Plan and will be compensated directly by SRHA to PJA. Heritage Towns & Tours grants between \$2,500 and \$25,000 will be awarded upon satisfactory completion of this part of the process and submission of a completed and awarded grant application.

WHAT'S REQUIRED TO ACCESS THESE GRANTS?

Requirements to access the grants are available at www.schuylkillriver.org/resources for links to the Grant Program Announcement, the Heritage Towns & Tours Toolkit, and the Grant Letter of Interest and Application Guidance. These resources are also available by contacting SRHA offices at: **Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area; Heritage Towns & Tours Grant Program; Attention: Kara Wilson, Trail Steward; 140 College Drive; Pottstown, PA 19464.**