
Maryland Heritage Areas Program
Strategic Plan Advisory Team
January 8, 2009

Stewardship: Preservation &
Protection of Historic Resources

Importance of Historic Resources to a Sustainable Heritage Area

- Heritage Area leaders understand the critical importance of well-preserved historic resources.

“The integrity of a heritage area experience rests on the veracity and quality of its heritage resources. Thus, preserving and enhancing heritage resources is a pivotal component of any heritage development strategy.”

Preservation & Protection are “Highly Important”

- Virtually all (97 percent) of stakeholders strongly believe that preservation and protection of historic resources is “highly important” to the success of a Heritage Area.

“The protection of historic sites is key to sustainable heritage tourism.”

Heritage Areas Support Preservation and Protection of Historic Resources

- Heritage Area leaders support the use of tools for preservation and protection of historic resources in their regions.

“This is work we support every day in some fashion, either by facilitating networking, providing resources, giving technical assistance, funding projects with our mini-grants, or supporting MHAA grant-funded projects.”

Heritage Areas Support Preservation and Protection Through Grant Funding

- Grant funding appears to be the primary way that Heritage Areas typically support preservation and protection of historic resources.

Eight of nine directors reported that their Heritage Area places a “high priority” on facilitating grants for preservation and protection.

3rd Parties Implement Preservation and Protection within Heritage Areas

“We would regard [preservation and protection] as a high priority, but our role is primarily to support our partners in these endeavors.”

“In general, [preservation and protection] are the responsibility of the county and municipal governments, public entities, and private interests that control and manage buildings and land use.”

Proven Tools for Preservation & Protection include:

- Establishment of local ordinances and commissions
- Designation and design review
- Use of compatible design
- Register listing
- Easements
- Tax credits and other financial incentives
- Education of property owners to maintain, repair, and properly alter
- Grass-roots advocacy to save threatened resources

Historic Preservation Commissions Implement Preservation and Protection

- Six of nine Heritage Area directors stated that their organization places a “high priority” on supporting the work done by local historic preservation commissions.

However, only one of nine directors said their Heritage Area places a “high priority” on advocating for designation and protection of historic resources pursuant to a local preservation ordinance.

Historic Preservation Commissions are Authorized to:

- Identify and designate landmarks and districts
- Review, approve, or reject plans for exterior changes ... or for demolition
- Acquire and enforce preservation easements
- Adopt and apply guidelines for alteration of historic structures and for new construction
- Formulate economically feasible plans to preserve resources of unusual importance
- Address demolition by neglect and other violations

Historic Preservation Commissions ...

- Complex, challenging, resource-intensive, and potentially controversial work to preserve & protect
- With sufficient support, HPCs have the potential to serve as highly effective stewards.
- Heritage Areas and HPCs are natural and necessary partners.

No. 1 Direct Engagement in HPC Work?

In a confidential survey, the National Trust asked 30 Historic Preservation Commissions located within Certified Heritage Areas to describe the degree to which the Heritage Area is directly engaged in the work of the Commission to preserve and protect historic resources.

Twenty-one HPCs responded to the survey.

Direct Engagement in HPC Work?

- Nine of twenty-one HPCs stated their Heritage Area is “not engaged” in the HPC’s work to preserve and protect historic resources.
- Ten of twenty-one HPCs said their Heritage Area is “somewhat engaged.”
- Two of twenty-one HPCs said their Heritage Area is “actively engaged.”

Direct Engagement in HPC Work?

“I have had no contact with the Heritage Area and have not even spoken with them during my three years employed by the local government.”

“The Heritage Area isn’t actively engaged as preservation advocates and I haven’t really thought of them as a partner of the Historic Preservation Commission.”

No. 2 HPC Suggestions for More Engagement in HPC Work?

The National Trust asked the Historic Preservation Commissions to suggest ways in which the Heritage Areas should become more directly engaged in the work of Historic Preservation Commissions to preserve and protect historic resources.

More Engagement in HPC Work?

“It’s difficult to evaluate ... due to the HPC’s limited engagement and knowledge of the Heritage Area and its activities.”

More Engagement in HPC Work?

“The Heritage Area could provide regular updates to preservation planning staff so that we may share information about preservation and the Heritage Area’s activities with our Commission and the public.”

HPC Suggestions for More Engagement in HPC Work?

“The Heritage Area could take a more active role in advocating for the designation of additional historic resources that support heritage tourism activities and do more to support public (and elected official) education on the important economic benefits of historic preservation.”

More Engagement in HPC Work?

“In our community it is important for every preservation organization and agency, including the Heritage Area, to promote the benefits of preservation and why it’s important to become designated under the local preservation law. ... We can never have enough voices.”

No. 3 Contributions by Heritage Areas to Preservation and Protection?

The National Trust asked the Historic Preservation Commissions to describe the degree to which the Heritage Areas' programs and activities contribute to the preservation and protection of historic resources.

Contributions by Heritage Areas to Preservation and Protection?

- Five of twenty-one HPCs stated that their Heritage Area makes a “major contribution” to the preservation and protection of historic resources.
- Ten of twenty-one HPCs stated that their Heritage Area makes a “modest contribution.”
- Six of twenty-one HPCs stated that their Heritage Area makes a “small contribution.”

No. 4 HPC Suggestions: How Heritage Areas Should Help Preserve & Protect

The National Trust asked the Historic Preservation Commissions to suggest ways in which the Heritage Areas should help to preserve and protect historic resources.

Heritage Areas Should Help Preserve & Protect

“The Heritage Area should help decipher the benefits of historic preservation and designation in everyday language for individual property owners. Property owners who are qualified to apply for historic preservation tax credits, loans, or grants are not widely aware of the benefits or how to apply.”

Heritage Areas Should Help Preserve & Protect

“As always, those who may voice opposition are mostly uneducated about historic preservation or have deep-seated misconceptions. It will take continual educational and promotional activities to overcome this bias. And, also as always, this is not the burden of the Heritage Area alone; it must be local governments and local advocacy and historical organizations who also do this at every opportunity.”

Nos. 5 & 6 Per HPCs, the Key Strengths and Weaknesses of Heritage Areas

The National Trust asked the Historic Preservation Commissions to describe the key strengths and weaknesses of the Heritage Areas.

The Commissions' responses are summarized in the Consultant Team's report.

No. 7 Challenges Facing Preservation Commissions within Heritage Areas

The National Trust asked the Historic Preservation Commissions to identify the types of challenges currently facing the local Commissions.

Challenges Facing HPCs within Heritage Areas

- Twelve of twenty-one HPCs reported that “destruction of historic resources” is a challenge facing the HPC.
- Fifteen of twenty-one HPCs reported “neglect of historic resources.”

Challenges Facing HPCs within Heritage Areas

- Fourteen of twenty-one HPCs reported “incompatible alteration of historic resources” is a challenge facing the HPC.
- Eleven of twenty-one HPCs reported “incompatible new development near historic resources.”

Challenges Facing HPCs within Heritage Areas

- Eleven of twenty-one HPCs reported that “local leaders are not knowledgeable about historic preservation” in the HPC’s community.
- Eight of twenty-one HPCs reported that “local leaders oppose historic preservation.”

Challenges Facing HPCs within Heritage Areas

- Eighteen of twenty-one HPCs reported that “property owners are not knowledgeable about historic preservation” in the HPC’s community.
- Twelve of twenty-one HPCs reported that “property owners oppose historic preservation.”

Challenges Facing HPCs within Heritage Areas

- Seventeen of twenty-one HPCs reported that the “local public is not knowledgeable about historic preservation” in the HPC’s community.
- Five of twenty-one HPCs reported that the “local public opposes historic preservation.”

Challenges Facing HPCs within Heritage Areas

- Twelve of twenty-one HPCs reported that their “commission members would benefit from training.”
- Seven of twenty-one HPCs reported “insufficient staff for the commission” is a challenge.
- Four of twenty-one HPCs reported “insufficient funding for the commission” is a challenge.

Challenges Facing HPCs within Heritage Areas

- Thirteen of twenty-one HPCs reported that “inadequate incentives for historic preservation” is a challenge facing the HPC.
- Nine of twenty-one HPCs reported that “inadequate regulation for historic preservation” is a challenge.

More challenges ... within heritage areas

“Generally, our Commission’s challenge is the mindset that government shouldn’t get involved in the preservation of historic resources on private property. We have a city council and a public that loves the character of our downtown and historic neighborhoods, but is afraid to work towards more protection. Unfortunately, it seems like it’s going to take the destruction of a landmark, or a grossly incompatible infill project to change that perception.”

More challenges ... statewide

“Many of Maryland’s forty-seven historic preservation commissions are facing some sort of crisis, even those commissions that are long established and where historic preservation is believed to be generally widely accepted and supported.”

Recommendations:

Each Certified Heritage Area should be more directly engaged in promoting the preservation and protection of historic resources.

- ✓ Technical assistance, training, and support
- ✓ Five-year action plans and annual work-plans

Recommendations:

Heritage Areas and Historic Preservation Commissions should work as essential partners to promote preservation and protection.

The Maryland Heritage Area Authority and its partners should focus their efforts to cultivate partnerships between Heritage Areas and Historic Preservation Commissions.

Maintain Strong Working Relationships

- Heritage Areas & HPCs should meet regularly to:
 - ✓ Communicate: Exchange information and confer
 - ✓ Coordinate: Leverage human, technical, and financial resources
 - ✓ Cooperate: Work together to achieve common goals

Sponsor Educational Programs to Promote Preservation & Protection

- Heritage Areas should sponsor programs for:
 - ✓ Local officials: Community benefits of preservation and working knowledge of tools for preservation & protection
 - ✓ Property owners: Nuts & bolts of preservation, especially incentives
 - ✓ Interested Public: Community benefits and links to heritage

Advocate for Preservation & Protection

- Heritage Areas should speak as public champions for preservation and protection:
 - ✓ Publically articulate rationale for preservation & protection, in coordination with HPCs
 - ✓ Participate in HPC public meetings
 - ✓ Help avoid (or resolve) controversies, using local connections