

The following language is proposed as an amendment to the City of Rockville's Comprehensive Master Plan, in accordance with the requirements of the Maryland Heritage Area Authority (MHAA) for the expansion of a Certified Heritage Area through the revision of a certified management plan [Title 14 *Independent Agencies*, Subtitle 29 *Maryland Heritage Area Authority*, Chapter 03 *Financial Institutions*, Section 06 *Revision of Management Plans*].

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism offers multiple benefits. It can help create jobs and diversify a local economy, increase property values and revenue, build community pride and help preserve a community's unique character. It can be a valuable component of an economic development strategy and is a growing industry: studies have shown that heritage visitors on average spend more per day, stay longer, and visit more places than tourists in general.¹

In order to effectively develop local support, create regional themes, and expand marketing potential, a successful local heritage tourism program needs partnerships with businesses, non-profit organizations, the County and the State. A key method for establishing these kinds of partnerships is for Rockville to take advantage of an established State program to encourage heritage tourism in the City - the Maryland Heritage Area program.

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) is an independent government body created in 1996 to oversee implementation of the Maryland Heritage Area Program, the State's heritage preservation and tourism initiative. The MHAA provides operating assistance, marketing, planning, and project grants to designated management entities within Maryland Certified Heritage Areas.

Maryland's Heritage Areas are locally designated and State-certified regions where public and private partners make commitments to preserve historical, cultural and natural resources for sustainable economic development through heritage tourism. Each of the Heritage Areas is defined by a distinct focus or theme that is different from other areas in the state.

The MHAA provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants to non-profit organizations and governments for capital and non-capital projects located within a Maryland Certified Heritage Area. Grants can support projects for historical, cultural or natural resources, sites, events, or facilities. Eligible projects must have a heritage tourism component, such as a destination or an event that will help create a sustained increase in visits to the Heritage Area.

¹ The Economics of Historic Preservation, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Donovan D. Rypkema, 1994; revised 2008. page 2.

The Montgomery County Heritage Area

Rockville is located within the Montgomery County Heritage Area (MCHA), which was certified by the Maryland Heritage Areas Program in 2004. The Heritage Area is managed by the non-profit Heritage Tourism Alliance of Montgomery County, also known as “Heritage Montgomery”. The Management Plan for the MCHA, which was also certified by the state in 2004, identifies the boundaries of the Heritage Area and presents Heritage Montgomery’s vision and goals together with the strategies, projects and programs to implement them. The Management Plan delineates the boundaries of the MCHA and includes three thematic heritage clusters:

Farming History

The farming history cluster is set in the 93,000-acre Agricultural Reserve and showcases historical rural landscapes.

Quakers and the Underground Railroad

The Quaker and Underground Railroad cluster is located in the eastern portion of the County and includes Sandy Spring, an early Quaker community. The area was also home to one of the earliest free African-American communities in the county and includes houses that are believed to have been part of the Underground Railroad.

Technological Innovation

The Technological Innovation cluster focuses on the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal along the Potomac River and the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad.

The Management Plan outlines strategies for enhancing the County’s environmental, recreational and cultural resources, improving linkages, advancing economic development strategies, and providing for stewardship and preservation. It complements other local, state and county initiatives in the Certified Heritage Area and is consistent with the approved and adopted master plans for the areas of Montgomery County included in the Heritage Area.

The Management Plan states that “The planning process has fostered strong interest from heritage organizations in other parts of the county, and it is expected that following the early success in implementation, the boundaries of the MCHA will likely be expanded.”²

² Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan, Heritage Montgomery, 2002, p.4

Rockville and the Montgomery County Heritage Area

Rockville has been invited to join the MCHA, after participating unofficially in the program for many years. An amendment to the MCHA Management Plan is required for Rockville to be included because it would join the existing CHA. As amended, the Management Plan will include a Rockville chapter, with specific recommendations to promote the City as a destination for heritage visitors. Additional recommendations will focus on ways to enhance the historic sites and districts, as well as the City's environmental, recreational and cultural resources.

Rockville fits well into the three established themes of the MCHA:

- Farming History – several early farms have been preserved for interpretation and use as City parks, including Dawson Farm Park, King Farm, and Glenview Farm.
- Underground Railroad - Rockville has a rich Civil War history and is part of the National Park Service's Network to Freedom project that, through nationwide preservation and education efforts, tells the story of resistance against slavery. In addition, the City has outstanding resources to illustrate the African American experience in the era of segregation, such as Lincoln High School and Carver High School.
- Technological Innovation – This broad theme brings attention to Rockville's early industrial and transportation heritage together with more recent technological innovations. The opening of the B&O Railroad in 1873 started a new period of modernization in Rockville. In the modern era, the City is the "home of the human genome".

Boundaries for the proposed CHA include resources that represent the Heritage Area themes and focus on the historic downtown area, with its surrounding residential development ranging from the late 18th century through the 21st century. The proposed CHA boundary generally corresponds with the City's 1949 boundary, with slight modifications.

Recommendation:

Join the Montgomery County Heritage Area and adopt the Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan herein by reference.