Making Connections: Heritage Tourism, Historic Preservation and the Texas Heritage Trails Program

Presented to: CLG Bootcamp

September 24, 2020
What Is Heritage Tourism?

Traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past.
Heritage Tourism Sites and Activities

- Historic structures
- Museums
- Festivals & Events
- Landscapes
- *People, places, and things that tell the stories of community, state, and nation.*
Five Principles of Heritage Tourism

1. Preserve and protect resources.
2. Focus on authenticity and quality.
3. Make sites come alive with interpretation.
4. Find the fit between community and tourism.
5. Collaborate for sustainability.
What Is Historic Preservation?

The practice of maintaining the historic built environment, landscapes, stories, locally produced products, traditions and other historic characteristics that define a community or culture for future generations.
Why is Historic Preservation important?

- Rehabilitating an existing building is often cheaper than building a new structure.
- Historic and cultural sites attract visitors.
- Preservation helps establish and maintain the “sense of place” that gives a community its distinct character.
Economic Benefits of Heritage Tourism

- Creates new jobs, businesses and attractions.
- Increases retail sales.
- Increases property values.
- Generates new tax revenues.
- Helps support community amenities.
- Helps support small business.
Texas tourism is a nearly $83 billion annual industry, with visitor spending in the state directly supporting 700,000 jobs in 2019 and generating $7.8 billion in state and local taxes.

- The THC’s last economic impact study demonstrated that *heritage travelers account for about 12.5 percent of direct travel spending in Texas.*
- Of that amount, nearly $2.3 billion can be attributed annually to *heritage-related activities of visitors.*
- Travelers in Texas who engage in heritage activities spend $30 more each day, per *person,* than non-heritage travelers.
- This same study surveyed sites participating in the THTP and found that this participation *increased revenues and visitation by nearly 14 percent.*

Texas Historical Commission; Office of the Governor – Economic Development and Tourism
Community Benefits of Heritage Tourism

- Brings people together.
- Enhances community pride.
- Builds a stronger community overall.
Preservation Benefits of Heritage Tourism

- Promotes preservation and protection of resources.
- Develops underutilized resources.
- Educates residents and visitors about traditions.
- Identifies the history of a community.
Heritage Tourists are unique!

- Slightly older
- More likely to have a college degree
- Tend to have higher household incomes
- Stay longer
- Spend more money per trip
- Pay for lodging more on overnight trips
- Come back more often
Texas Heritage Trails Program

A Regional Tourism Initiative
TxDOT’s Travel Trails Revitalized
Texas Heritage Trails Program Assistance

- Financial
- Technical
- Product development
- Marketing and promotion
Heritage Tourism Product Development

- Site evaluations
- Topic-specific programming
  - Preserve America workshops (2006/2007)
- Heritage tourism partnership grants
- Heritage Tourism Guidebook
- Website development (w/regional contributions)
- Web apps
Heritage Tourism Program, since 2015, has produced free web app tours on the following topics:

- African Americans in Texas
- Red River War
- World War II in Texas
- Hispanic Texans
- La Salle Odyssey
- Town Square Walk-Around
- Historic Bankhead Highway
- Chisholm Trail
- World War I
- German Texans
- The Independence Story
Regional Product Development

Texas Heritage Trail Regions

- Building regional awareness of historic resources
- Developing regional partnerships
Regional Product Development

Texas Heritage Trail Regions
Develop regional tourism products based on authentic cultural and historic themes

- Forts Trail Ride
- Bicycle Friendly Initiative
- Horse Country Tour
- Quanah Parker Trail
Texas Historical Commission

- Promotes all regions equally
- 10 regional travel guides and thematic guides, Texas Heritage Travel Guide
- Web Portal (texastimetravel.com) and 10 regional sites
- Advertising in Texas destination publications (when funds are available)
Regional Marketing and Promotion

Texas Heritage Trail Regions

- Print pieces – targeted brochures, rack cards, maps
- Co-op and full regional advertising
- Social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
- Regional blogs
- Trade show/State Fair participation
Texas Heritage Trails Program History

Preserve America Award

2005 Preserve America Presidential Award Winner
Texas Heritage Trails Program History

50th Anniversary Celebration

- “50 years of Texas Travel Trails” panel at Real Places 2018
- Texas Mountain, Forts, and Pecos Trail Regions Caravans (www.texasheritagetrailregions.com)
- Stay an Extra Day Sweepstakes (www.extradayintexas.com)
- Regional passport programs
- 2018 State Fair Recognition
Ten Paths to One Goal

To increase visitation to cultural and heritage sites and bring more dollars to Texas communities through successful local preservation efforts, combined with statewide marketing of heritage regions as tourism destinations.
How Can you Participate in the THTP?

- Contact your regional executive director
- Join the heritage tourism listserv
- Sign up for the Heritage Traveler e-newsletter
- Sign up for the Medallion
- Attend THC’s Real Places conference
- Share information & resources
- Contribute to your regional web site
- Be an advocate for heritage tourism
Need Additional Information?

Sarah Page  
*Heritage Tourism Program Coordinator*

Community Heritage Development Division  
512.463.2630  
sarah.page@thc.texas.gov

Teresa Caldwell  
*THTP State Coordinator*

512.463.5755  
teresa.caldwell@thc.texas.gov