

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS: **Heritage Tourism**

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation:

*Linking tourism and preservation can do more for local economies—and for tourism and preservation—than promoting them separately. That’s the core idea in heritage tourism: save your heritage, share it with visitors, and reap the economic benefits of tourism.<sup>1</sup>*

One of the key areas to develop in historic preservation in the last fifteen years has been the link between historic preservation and tourism. With tourism among the leading retail industries in the country, and statistics illustrating the popularity of historic sites, the link makes perfect sense and has translated to revenue and jobs for many communities. According to a 1997 study by the Travel Industry Association of America:

- One-third of all U.S. adults—65.9 million—visited a historic place or cultural event while traveling.
- Visitors to historic sites spend more nights away from home—5.2 nights as compared to 3.3 nights for average travelers.
- Travelers to historic and cultural sites spend more money, an average of \$615 per trip, as compared to \$425 per trip for average travelers.<sup>2</sup>

The National Trust proposes five basic principles to make the most of heritage tourism opportunities:

- **Focus on authenticity and quality**  
The special charm and uniqueness of communities is what will draw visitors.
- **Preserve and protect resources**  
Protecting buildings and neighborhoods that can attract visitors will safeguard these properties for the future.
- **Make sites come alive**  
Interpreting sites in a creative and exciting way is essential for a successful tourism experience.
- **Find the fit—between your community and tourism**  
Local priorities vary and so do local capabilities. Heritage tourism programs succeed when they have widespread local acceptance and meet local needs.

- **Collaborate**

A successful program depends on the active participation of political leaders, business leaders, operators of tourist sites, artists and craftspeople, hotel/motel operators, and many others. Cooperating in a regional arrangement encourages the development of themes, pooling of resources, savings of money, and an expansion of tourism potential.<sup>3</sup>

Key to improving the heritage tourism potential of Carbondale is *protecting* historic resources through actively registering properties as local landmarks, historic districts, and neighborhood preservation districts. This is the only way to ensure some level of preservation and protection of these properties, through the City's ability to have design review. Some of the uniqueness and quality of Carbondale's historic resources has been diminished by adverse architectural changes which have occurred because these properties have no protection.

In addition to a more active program of local historic designation, recognition of properties on both the National and Carbondale Register of Historic Places can be a useful promotional tool as well. Many communities and regions choose to use historic register programs in advertising their communities. Businesses and specialty uses such as beds & breakfasts typically promote their recognition on such registers through advertisements which include register listings. Certainly historic district designations broaden the potential attraction to an area, as an entire Downtown may be able to claim recognition.

Related to register programs might be interpretation tools such as brochures or wayfinding systems which help residents and visitors learn more about these properties. As the National Trust's principle #3 states, "Make sites come alive." The ability to creatively interpret the City's historic resources could give a special enhancement and attraction. The City could consider map inlays in the sidewalks or lighted map kiosks to interpret sites, particularly in the Downtown/Town Square and neighborhoods along major thoroughfares, once the numbers of register designations improve.

Regional links are particularly important to the Carbondale area. With the increasing success of the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail and the promotion of The Art Trail of Southern Illinois, these could make good linkages to activities in the City of Carbondale. Some of the suggested preservation education activities could connect to these thematic tourist attraction programs. In any case, partnering with other organizations to create a regional attraction does make sense. In addition to the Carbondale Convention & Tourism Bureau, the Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau could be another important link.

Tourism bureaus are the obvious recipients of financial assistance through the Tourism Programs of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), but other recipients are eligible for funding as well. The Local Tourism Division of DCCA offers six local tourism funding programs, which are available to counties, municipalities, not-for-profit organizations,

and local promotion groups for the marketing of tourism attractions and events. These assistance programs, typically in the form of matching grants, include four which may directly relate to preservation activities:

### ***Tourism Marketing Partnership Program***

promotional projects may include radio, television, newspaper and magazine ads, printed brochures, Web site development, travel trade show registration, and marketing research.

### ***Tourism Attraction Development Grant and Loan Program***

projects to develop and improve . . . historical sites, lodging, areas of historical or scenic interest, museums, recreation areas or other facilities that attract or serve travelers. This is mainly a “bricks-and-mortar” program. In addition to the eligible groups listed above, a smaller percentage of project costs may also be awarded to for-profit businesses.

### ***Tourism Private Sector Grant Program***

matching funds from sources in the private sector to attract and host regional, national, or international tourism events such as conventions, trade shows, or major sporting activities. Local governments may apply but the source of matching funds must be private sector (i.e., non-governmental).

### ***Heritage Tourism Programs***

a program initiated to assist communities in developing or enhancing cultural heritage tourism destinations. Heritage projects receive technical and administrative funding along with priority consideration for funding from the other grant programs.

Given the grants that are available, partnering with local and regional tourism bureaus for preservation-related activities could provide the funding, advertising, and participation that is necessary to make some events even more successful than they might be otherwise.

Additionally, the Preservation Commission might tap into some of the major publications of the Illinois Tourism Bureau, which could provide a tremendous advertising base for activities. Appropriate publications include:

- *Weekend Adventure Guide* – 144-page guide book offering a variety of interesting pre-planned short getaways

- *Illinois Travel Guide* – a comprehensive guide to attractions and accommodations throughout the state; published biannually
- *Illinois Fairs and Festivals Guide* – includes festivals, special events and attractions, and sporting events throughout the state; released biannually

### **Endnotes**

1. National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Getting Started: How to Succeed in Heritage Tourism* (Washington, D.C. National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1993; reprint, 1999), p. 2 (page citations are to the reprint edition.)
2. Ibid., 4.
2. Ibid., 11-15.