

Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan 2016 - 2018



Photo credit: Gary David Gold

Produced by the

Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council

and HTC Partners

January 2016

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Many Advisory Council, Working Group leaders and other supporters gathered for a final meeting in mid January 2016.

Front row from right: Arlene Way, Kathy Quandt attending for the ACCVB, Miriam Trementozzi (AC Co-chair), Tammis Groft, Susan Holland, Mary Liz Stewart (in back), Jessica Neidl.

Back row from right: Norman Rice, Daniel Butterworth, Mark Schaming, James Jamieson, Matthew Bender (AC Co-chair), Paul Stewart, John J. McEneny, Anthony Opalka.

Those not able to attend: Phoebe Bender, Sarah Reginelli, Justin Smith, Liselle LaFrance, Georgette Steffens, Michele Vennard and Karen Bilowith.
(Photo: AIHA)

To: Mayor Kathy M. Sheehan

January 2016

From: Matthew Bender IV and Miriam Trementozzi, Co-chairs
Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council

On behalf of the Advisory Council, we are pleased to present the *Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2018*. A key finding is that the cultural heritage of the City of Albany, along with the rich assets of the Capital Region, is of **national and international caliber**. But many of the excellent offerings of individual heritage sites and arts and culture organizations need coordination to create more compelling visitor experiences that attract national attention and increase visitor stays and spending.

Albany has many distinctions: continuously settled since 1624, the longest continuously chartered city in America (1686) and the Capital City of the influential Empire State. All of this adds up to stories that tell the building of the state and nation. There is great potential for the city and the region to become, as the plan states, a **“top international cultural heritage tourism destination.”**

In fulfilling its charge, the Council has recommended three goals, twelve strategies and over thirty tactics to help achieve that vision. **But at the heart of it all is the critical need for establishing a lead organization — i.e., the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACCVB) — and a committed partnership** to serve as the central coordinating body to implement the plan. Cultural heritage tourism is really an eco-system within the wider tourism industry. Expertise and collaboration are needed from groups that don't ordinarily communicate with each other.

Stakeholders range from the hospitality, retail and creative sectors to government and residents to the heritage, arts, culture and historic preservation communities. **All stand to benefit and all are essential** to creating a vibrant destination offering authentic experiences for visitors and residents alike as well as increasing urban quality of life.

With the launch of the new Albany Capital Center in early 2017, the City of Albany has a prime opportunity to build on the collaboration, knowledge and momentum of leaders from key sectors or organizations involved in the planning process. Given the city's fiscal constraints, it will take time to leverage all the resources needed, but much can still be done through the ACCVB and the partnership. **The time is now to give life to the vision.** Cultural heritage tourism can raise Albany and the region's national visibility and expand jobs and quality of life.



From: Mayor Kathy M. Sheehan

January 2016



TO THE COMMUNITY

In Albany, it's not hard to find people enthusiastic about history. As the oldest continuously settled city in the country and Capital of the Empire State, Albany has been home and host to generations of people who helped weave, from its first threads, the fabric of our nation.



With its long history, Albany has stories to tell. Stories about families and leaders, about buildings and commerce, about struggle and hard-won progress. Stories of invention and industry that changed the world.

Our history is one of our best, most valuable assets. Cultural heritage tourism is a powerful economic driver, and Albany is rich in the kinds of assets — historic architecture, museums, cultural institutions and landscapes — that can attract visitors and grow jobs. What's more, we have a growing critical mass of people who love this city and are eager to work together to lift it up for the world to see.

The challenge has been both about the “what” — what is the vision and what does world-class heritage tourism require — as well as the “how” — best practices for achieving it. This document, thanks to the dedicated volunteers of the Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council that I convened, led by Co-chairs Miriam Tremontozzi and Matthew Bender IV, provides solutions to that challenge. The purpose of this Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan is to empower Albany to tell its stories — to highlight and vivify them through committed, collaborative effort and projects, and in doing so capture the interest, stoke the imagination, and win the hearts of visitors to our region and residents, alike.

There is simply no place like Albany. And with that confidence, and with this plan as a guide, we move forward, shaping our city's future by bringing its colorful past to life.



(Note: January 2016 plan with minor proofreading edits August 2018)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albany, the Capital City of the Empire State, is one of America's First Cities. As such, it is rich in cultural heritage assets that if collectively developed and promoted can tell the story of the state and the nation in a powerful way. They also can serve as a significant catalyst for new economic growth, enriched quality of life and a renewed sense of place for residents and visitors alike.

Mayor Kathy Sheehan identified the city's potential to become a major cultural heritage tourism destination as well as help drive the Capital Region's growth in this sector. Thus a year ago she convened a volunteer group, the **Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council**, to develop a vision and strategic plan. This planning complements the ongoing initiatives of the Heritage Tourism Working Group that she convened earlier to advance specific projects.

Cultural Heritage Tourism is "traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present."

It includes historic, cultural, natural and intangible resources unique and distinctive to the destination, both traditional and contemporary.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Together, these efforts help support the new \$66.5 million Albany Capital Center facility slated to open in early 2017 as well as other significant residential and commercial investment downtown.

The Advisory Council conducted a research-based process with the expert assistance of HTC Partners, a Georgia-based consulting firm. From considering national trends in cultural heritage tourism to reviewing successes in other cities such

as Annapolis and Charleston, the process resulted in a solid foundation for developing informed approaches for Albany and ultimately other communities regionally.

Key Research Findings

- **Tourism is an important part of Albany County's economy.** Traveler spending in 2013 was \$893 million. In a six-county area, 7.4 percent of all employment was generated by tourism – 6.9 percent in Albany County. Tourism supported 15,281 jobs (direct/indirect). (*Tourism Economics Economic Impact of Tourism in New York*)
- **National data provide evidence of the value cultural heritage tourism can add to tourism overall.** For example, on average, U.S. cultural heritage tourists spend more and stay longer than general leisure travelers. (Source: *The Cultural & Heritage Traveler, 2013 Edition*, Mandala Research LLC 2013) The city has a major opportunity to help expand the economic impact of tourism for the city, county and region.
- **The City of Albany has the assets to stand out among other destinations.** Its stories are nationally significant, telling of the building of the influential Empire State and the nation. Albany has been continuously settled since 1624 and is the longest continuously chartered city in the U.S. (since 1686).
- **Albany's heritage, along with the rich assets of the Capital Region, is of national and international caliber.** Albany's stories are written in the city's architecture, told by museums and

other heritage sites and expressed in the diversity of arts and cultural events and festivals. Albany can best achieve its desired brand by staying “authentic” and owning its unique stories.

- **Coordination and partnership are essential to creating more compelling visitor experiences** that attract national attention and increase visitor stays and spending.
- **Consumer trends relevant to cultural heritage tourism efforts in Albany include:** consumer desire for immersive experiences; increased use of technology to plan trips and use on site; regional partnerships such as for thematic trails to help extend visitors’ on-site stays; and distinctive conventions and meetings that tap historic sites and unique venues for off-property events.
- **Increasing competition requires making smart choices and applying best practices.** Research on several cities including Annapolis and Charleston identified some common elements of successful and sustainable destinations — i.e., the importance of historic preservation and authenticity, strong partnerships, research-based decision making, quality products, consistent leadership and appropriate management structure.

Recommendations and Vision

The research and planning process resulted in the Vision 2020 statement (at right) and 3 goals, 12 strategies and 35 tactics presented in this plan. In brief:

GOAL 1: PROMOTE AND EXPAND

Promote and expand Albany’s existing cultural heritage experiences.

Focus of strategies and tactics: Share distinctive authentic stories through engaging visitor experiences; enhance visitor readiness and quality of existing and emerging assets; add new high-quality products; increase visibility through signage and infrastructure improvements; market assets and products.

GOAL 2: PRESERVE AND PROTECT

Preserve and protect Albany’s cultural and heritage assets for present and future generations.

Focus of strategies and tactics: Ensure effective preservation policies and practices are included in existing plans; identify operational and preservation needs for cultural and heritage assets to prioritize funding requests.

GOAL 3: FUND AND MANAGE

Establish the management and funding structure to implement the strategic plan.

Focus of strategies and tactics: Build on the on-going work of the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau to help advance cultural heritage tourism priorities in the plan; City to establish a partnership entity as the central coordinating body to implement the plan; partnership to serve as a resource to Capital Region communities; provide for a future director; and develop and administer a sustainable, diversified funding model.

VISION 2020

The City of Albany and the Capital Region are recognized as a top international cultural heritage tourism destination.

In 2020, the City of Albany and Capital Region have a strong preservation ethic, where residents promote their appreciation of place and community pride, and cultural heritage tourism robustly contributes to the region's economic vitality and growth.

Documenting the Impact

One of the most important strategies is to document and assess the outcome and impact of cultural heritage tourism. Five performance indicators are proposed from growth in visitation and spending to increases in publicity and visitor satisfaction.

The Time for Action is Now

Albany, the Capital City of the Empire State, is one of America's First Cities and should claim its position in a major way in the settling of the state and nation. The city's authentic cultural heritage assets, if further developed and promoted collectively, can help realize Albany's potential as an international cultural heritage tourism destination and help drive this sector's growth in the county and region. In so doing, Albany can be a catalyst for new economic opportunities, enriched quality of life and an increased pride of place for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY FOR ALBANY

The City of Albany has arrived at an opportune moment for tapping a largely underutilized resource. Under the leadership of Mayor Kathy Sheehan, Albany's cultural heritage resources are recognized for:

- offering great value in telling the story of New York State and the nation for the benefit of residents and tourists alike, and
- providing a unique foundation for strengthening neighborhoods, economic growth, quality of life and sense of place.



The New York State Capitol is a National Historic Landmark. Above, the Great Western Staircase (Photo: New York State)

These assets, if further developed and promoted collectively, can help realize the city's potential as a major cultural heritage tourism destination. At the same time they will support other key development activities in the City of Albany such as the new \$66.5 million convention facility (the Albany Capital Center) as well as transformative new residential housing and continuing economic investment in downtown.

The leveraging of these assets aligns with the vision of the Albany 2030 comprehensive plan: "Albany in 2030 has built on its history and diverse natural, cultural and human resources to become a global model for sustainable revitalization and urban livability."¹

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It includes historic, cultural, natural and intangible resources unique and distinctive to the destination, both traditional and contemporary.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

In this context, Mayor Sheehan created the Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council in December 2014. She charged the all-volunteer group with developing a strategic plan to recommend ways Albany can become a major destination for cultural heritage tourism and also help drive the region's growth in this sector. The Council's creation complemented the ongoing initiatives of the Heritage Tourism Working Group the Mayor had convened some months earlier to advance projects and action steps.

To explore the growth of this type of tourism in Albany, the Advisory Council, and various Working Group leaders, conducted a comprehensive process of research and reflection with the expert assistance of HTC Partners, a Georgia-based consulting firm founded by Cheryl Hargrove. From considering national trends in cultural heritage

¹ Albany 2030: The City of Albany Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary, http://www.albany2030.org/files/sites/default/files/Albany%202030%20Comprehensive%20Plan_Executive%20Summary.pdf accessed 12-4-15.

tourism to reviewing successes in other cities like Annapolis, Charleston and Providence, the process resulted in a solid foundation for developing informed approaches for Albany and ultimately, other communities regionally.

Profile: Cultural Heritage Travelers

A 2013 tourism report by Mandala Research, LLC revealed that 76 percent of all U.S. leisure travelers — or 129.6 million adults annually — engage in a cultural heritage activity, spending an overall \$171 billion on travel. Due to this economic potential and interest in local asset-based experiences, U.S. cultural heritage travelers are an attractive market for destinations. As compared to U.S. leisure travelers, they:



Concert on the Empire State Plaza (Photo: New York State)

- spend more on average: \$1,319 vs. \$820 per trip;
- stay longer than average: 4.7 nights vs. 3.4 nights;
- travel more often: 3 or more trips annually.²

The cultural heritage traveler is a more educated, slightly older consumer interested in authenticity and activities they can't engage in at home. The cultural heritage traveler prefers leisure travel that is educational (56 percent), and 40 percent will pay more for distinctive lodging, especially if it includes a cultural or heritage component.³ Almost half of their spending (46 percent) is on activities, dining and shopping.⁴

Baby boomers continue to dominate the profile of cultural heritage travelers in the U.S. Gen X travelers (age 35–50) are increasingly interested in cultural heritage activities, particularly nightlife. Millennials also desire cultural heritage experiences, favoring “foodie trips” and one-of-a-kind activities. (This group, born 1981–2001, will account for one-third of the U.S. population in 2020.)⁵



Activities in Washington Park during the annual Tulip Festival which attracts 30,000-60,000 visitors (Photo: Albany County CVB)

² “The Cultural and Heritage Traveler, 2013 Edition,” Mandala Research, LLC 2013.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “Generational Marketing – Focusing on the Five Major Generation Groups,” STS Marketing College, Young Strategies, 2014.

Families also enjoy cultural heritage tourism attractions. While adults with children represent one third of the U.S. population, they make up half of all visits to attractions (manmade, cultural, historic, natural). Priorities for their visits include: togetherness, fun, variety, unique experiences, (the desire to) learn something new and to go someplace new.⁶

International travelers are also interested in experiencing the culture and heritage of other countries. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce's *2010 Overseas Visitor Profile Report*,⁷ more than one third of all overseas travelers to the U.S. (excluding Canada and Mexico) engage in a cultural heritage activity. Specifically,

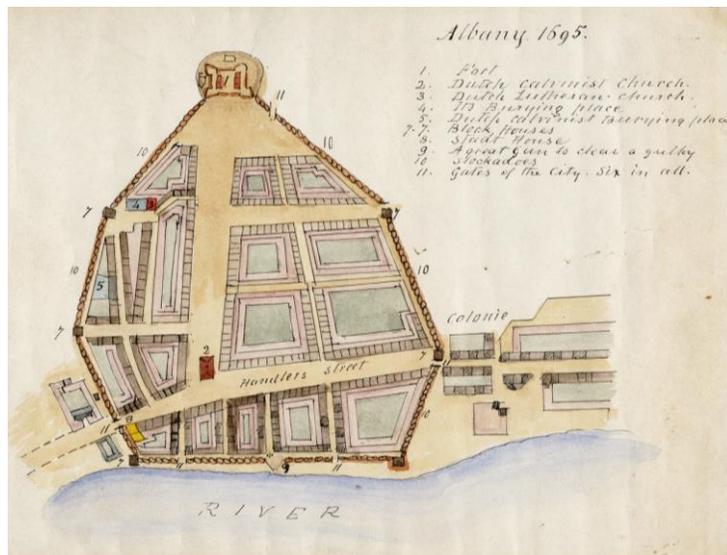
- 39.7 percent visit historical places (a higher rate than those visiting amusement/theme parks);
- 24.1 percent visit art galleries or museums;
- 23.7 percent visit cultural/heritage sites.

Despite the recent recession, the interest in arts, culture and heritage continues to grow. This is clearly a major opportunity for Albany given its extensive cultural heritage resources.

Albany Stands Out as One of America's First Cities

The strategic planning process put Albany in a national context, showing just how remarkable it is. Ranging from the city's architectural excellence and riverfront location to the strength of several museum collections to the vitality and diversity of festivals and events, Albany has the assets to stand out among other cities. Nationally significant or resonant stories can be told of peoples, conflicts, progress, innovation and creativity. They speak to the experiences of Native Americans, European explorers, enslaved peoples, immigrants from several countries, political leaders and many more.

These stories stem from a fact, often overlooked, that **Albany is "one of America's First Cities."**⁸ Albany was granted a charter by the English in 1686. As such, it is the longest continuously chartered city in the U.S. Further, Albany has been continuously settled since 1624. Thus the European roots that ultimately grew into Albany are part of the nation's story of early settlement. For reference, two of the best known in that story are Jamestown, Virginia, established 1607,



Above: John Miller Plan of Albany in 1695. (Photo: Albany Institute of History & Art)

⁶ *The Art of the Family Vacation*, PGAV Destinations, Volume 9, Issue 01, July 2012.

⁷ *2010 Overseas Visitor Profile Report*, National Travel & Tourism Office, U.S. Department of Commerce.

⁸ Anthony Opalka, City Historian, "Albany: One of America's First Cities," Partners for Albany Stories paper, accessed on 12-3-15 <http://www.albanyinstitute.org/albany-one-of-americas-first-cities.html>. This section is based on the article and other information provided by the author.

and the site of the Plymouth colony, 1620. Today they exist as re-creations — living history museums.⁹

A BRIEF EARLY ALBANY TIMELINE

1609	English explorer Henry Hudson’s voyage for the Dutch East India Company
1614–c.1617	Dutch established Fort Nassau , abandoned it due to flooding
1624	Dutch settled Fort Orange on the Hudson River’s edge
1640s	Village called Beverwyck grew around Fort Orange
1664	Village renamed Albany when the English took over the Dutch colonies in North America
1686	Chartered as the City of Albany by the English
Since 1683	Seat of county government
Since 1797	Permanent Capital of New York State , playing an influential role in developing the nation, four New York State governors became U.S. Presidents ¹⁰

In short, Albany’s heritage, along with the rich heritage of the region documented in the 2013 *Heritage Tourism in the Capital Region Vision Plan*,¹¹ are of national and international caliber. **Hence the vision for the future articulated by the Advisory Council:**

Economically Speaking

Over the long term, building cultural heritage tourism visitation can help increase jobs, wages and visitor spending and overnight stays, contributing to state and local tax receipts.

Cultural heritage tourism is, of course, a component of the broader tourism industry. Using this wider lens for reporting economic impact, traveler spending in Albany County in 2013 was \$893 million, according to Tourism Economics. This represented 52 percent of tourism sales in the six-county area called the Capital-Saratoga Region. Visitors generated \$114.6 million in state and local taxes — 53.8 percent of the region’s tourism tax base. Tourism supported 15,281 jobs in Albany County (direct/indirect) and \$476.8 million in labor income. In this region, 7.4 percent of all employment was generated by tourism — 6.9 percent in Albany County (11.5 percent in Saratoga County).¹²

VISION 2020

The City of Albany and the Capital Region are recognized as a top international cultural heritage tourism destination.

In 2020, the City of Albany and Capital Region have a strong preservation ethic, where residents promote their appreciation of place and community pride, and cultural heritage tourism robustly contributes to the region’s economic vitality and growth.

⁹ According to HTC Partners, the Jamestown Settlement is a living history museum and Historic Jamestowne is the archaeological site managed by the National Park Service; Plimoth Plantation is a living history museum and re-created village.

¹⁰ Anthony Opalka, “Albany: One of America’s First Cities.”

¹¹ *Heritage Tourism in the Capital Region Vision Plan*, May 2013, Capital Region Workgroup, PATH THROUGH HISTORY.

¹² Tourism Economics: Economic Impact of Tourism in New York, 2013 Calendar Year, Regional Detail Capital-Saratoga.

A Measure of Tourism Impact

“Were it not for tourism-generated state and local taxes, the average household in Albany County would have to pay an additional \$997 to maintain the same level of government revenue.”

Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau Fact Sheet,
The Impact of Tourism on Albany County
(2013 & 2014 data)

According to Smith Travel Research, in 2014 the hotel occupancy rate for Albany County was 67 percent, up 6.6 percent over 2013. The average daily rate was \$103, and the revenue generated per room was \$69.3.¹³

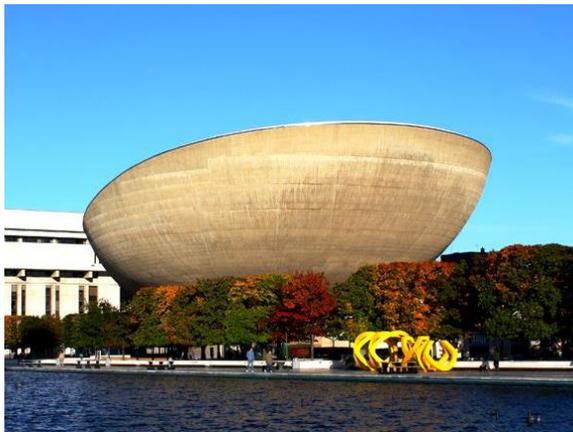
Regional Relevance

While the Advisory Council’s work has largely focused on the City of Albany, it also has recognized the importance of the regional context as well as interconnections in regional heritage whether through the American Revolution or 19th-century industrial growth.

The 2013 *Heritage Tourism in the Capital Region Vision Plan*, prepared as part of the Governor’s PATH (PATH THROUGH HISTORY) initiative, laid some important groundwork for collaboration in such areas as communications and marketing. Also of note, the plan was created in partnership with the eight-county Capital Region Regional Economic Development Council (CREDC).¹⁴

What the Advisory Council’s strategic plan for Albany now offers is the essential **detailed roadmap of what needs to happen at the local level** to achieve the status of a major destination. As Albany develops its own capacity, Albany can also serve as a resource and regional hub to help drive cultural heritage tourism in the eight-county region.

Albany is well positioned to make cultural heritage tourism one of the city, county and region’s next opportunities for increasing economic growth and community revitalization.



Albany’s stories are written in the city’s architecture, told by museums and other heritage sites, and expressed in the diversity of arts and cultural activities, events and festivals.

Left: The Egg, Center for the Performing Arts (Photo: Albany County CVB)

¹³ STR (Smith Travel Research) for Albany County NY CVB For the Month of October 2015.

¹⁴ *Heritage Tourism in the Capital Region Vision Plan*, p. 1 (Introduction).

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



Mayor Sheehan at Stakeholders Forum in December (Photo: Gene Loparco)

Mayor Kathy Sheehan convened two volunteer groups to help make Albany a major destination for cultural heritage tourism. The Working Group (launched July 2014) has been developing and advancing specific projects and action steps. The Advisory Council (created in December 2014) was charged with developing a strategic plan. The co-chairs and other leaders of the Working Group have been important participants in this effort. The Council hired HTC Partners to provide planning expertise and conduct research given the firm's extensive experience in the many facets of cultural heritage tourism from hospitality to marketing to preservation.

The Advisory Council began its work by convening a **workshop** in mid-February 2015 to develop a common knowledge base on cultural heritage tourism. Mayor Sheehan and about 50 leaders from both groups learned about national trends and received updates on local initiatives relevant to cultural heritage tourism. The Advisory Council and colleagues discussed the strategic planning process the next day, led by HTC Partners' President Cheryl Hargrove.

In the spring, planning focused on developing a comprehensive **Situation Analysis**. Throughout this period and beyond, **the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACCVB)** greatly assisted the Council's work and is a key partner to further advance cultural heritage tourism.

The Situation Analysis included a major focus on identifying current cultural heritage tourism resources which were captured in four asset inventories. Created largely by Advisory Council and Working Group volunteers, the **three main inventories are:** Historic, Cultural, Architectural and Archeological Assets; Cultural Events and Festivals; and Resources for Developing and Enhancing Heritage Tourism.

As a compendium to the Situation Analysis, HTC Partners prepared **two research reports:** the **Competitive Analysis**, examining the successes of six cities in cultural heritage tourism, and the **Overview of Visitor Information Centers**, identifying key trends. Additionally, **pilot market research** was conducted in May at 10 heritage sites and attractions. Visitors were invited to complete a paper survey, and the ACCVB and New York State Museum also administered a more detailed online survey. HTC Partners designed the questionnaires and summarized results in a report, **Overview of Pilot Market Research**.

In late June, the Advisory Council and key Working Group leaders met for a **strategic visioning and planning session**. The agenda focused on outcomes for three major components of the plan: tourism product development, marketing and management. Three committees subsequently developed specific goals, strategies and tactics for their assigned area. Chairs were: Tammis Groft (AIHA), Product Development; Georgette Steffens (Downtown BID), Marketing; Miriam Trementozi, Management. Susan Holland (HAF) served as a continuing resource in preservation and community planning.

The Council prioritized committee recommendations in November, followed by additional work. On December 18, Mayor Sheehan and the Council convened a Stakeholders Forum to discuss the Council's efforts and a draft executive summary. Leaders from the heritage, hospitality, tourism and business sectors were invited to provide feedback. The final Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan was provided to Mayor Kathy Sheehan in early February 2016.

ALBANY'S CULTURAL HERITAGE IDENTITY

One of America's First Cities



Mohawk Longhouse, Native Peoples of New York Exhibition, New York State Museum (Photo: NYSM)

Albany, a 21st-century city and the heart of New York's Tech Valley, is built on a rich heritage spanning hundreds of years. Located about 150 miles north of New York Harbor on the west side of the Hudson River, it was once the home of Mahicans, and later Mohawks, members of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy.

After Henry Hudson's voyage of 1609, Albany was settled by the Dutch in 1624 as Fort Orange, a fur-trading post. A village called Beverwyck grew around the fort in the 1640s, renamed Albany in 1664 with the English takeover of Dutch colonies in North America. Albany was granted a charter in 1686, now the longest continuously chartered city in the United States.

Its position at the eastern end of the Mohawk Valley made Albany strategically important among rival English and French explorers and Native Americans, and, during the American Revolution, between England and the colonists. The city became a transportation hub, with turnpikes, the Erie Canal and early railroads.

Albany has been the seat of county government since 1683 and permanent state capital since 1797, which shaped the city's cultural and political history and its physical form.

Albany transitioned from a 19th-century industrial city to a 20th-century city focused on government, medical, technical, financial and educational employment and is the home of almost a dozen colleges and universities. Today that legacy continues in a robust way while the city now also hosts an international center of nanoscale science, engineering and technology education and research and development.¹⁵ City population: 98,424, County population: 308,171.¹⁶



East Side Market Street from Maiden Lane South, Albany 1805 (Detail), James Eights, Artist, date: c. 1850. Market Street is now Broadway. Image shows mix of Dutch and English architecture. (Image: Albany Institute of History & Art)

Distinctive Assets

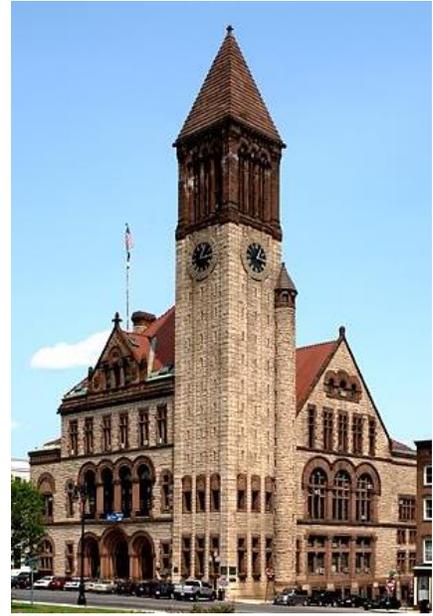
As documented in the asset inventory, Albany's cultural heritage resources are distinctive and diverse. Some of the key "visitor ready" sites include the following (images of many are found at the end of this section or in elsewhere in the plan):

¹⁵ Summary of Albany's history by City Historian, Anthony Opalka, June 2015.

¹⁶ U.S. Census: city 2013 estimate; county 2014 estimate (census.gov).

Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan

- **Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center**, providing an introduction to historic Albany
- **New York State Museum** (1870), presenting the state's natural, cultural and human history
- **Albany Institute of History & Art** (1791), focusing on the art, history, and culture of the upper Hudson Valley
- **18th-century historic house museums** — Historic Cherry Hill, Ten Broeck Mansion and Schuylar Mansion, a National Historic Landmark
- **Other National Historic Landmarks** including the beautifully restored State Capitol building, St. Peter's Episcopal Church and the USS Slater destroyer escort
- **Crailo State Historic Site** (1707), Rensselaer, the museum of the Colonial Dutch in the Hudson River Valley
- **Shaker Heritage Society site**, the original Shaker settlement, founded in 1776



City Hall (Photo: Albany County CVB)

- **Residence of abolitionists Stephen and Harriet Myers**, an important stop on the Underground Railroad
- **African American Cultural Center of the Capital Region, American Italian Heritage Museum, Irish American Heritage Museum** and other cultural centers
- The monumental, modernist **Empire State Plaza and the Rockefeller Art Collection**
- **Washington Park, the Corning Preserve riverfront park** (accessed by a walkway in downtown), **the Albany Rural Cemetery** and other parks and gardens
- Historic venues such as the **Palace Theater** and the **Washington Park Lakehouse**
- An active creative community in art, music and culture such as the **Albany Center Gallery, Albany Symphony Orchestra and Capital Repertory Theatre**

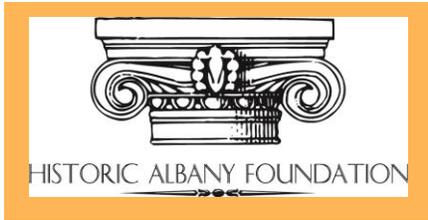


The historic Palace Theater, home of the Albany Symphony Orchestra, during a performance (Photo: Gary David Gold)

The city itself is a showcase of 19th- and 20th-century architecture. The historic neighborhoods — including Arbor Hill, Center Square/Hudson Park, Mansion, Pastures, South End and Washington Park — are special places rich in historic row houses, churches, schools and cultural assets.

Downtown Albany tells the story of the Capital City and its intersection with commerce and transportation. Iconic buildings and their architects include: City Hall (Henry Hobson Richardson), the

Court of Appeals Building (Henry Rector), the State Education Building (Henry Hornbostel and George Carnegie Palmer), the former Albany Academy (Philip Hooker), the former Delaware and Hudson Railroad Building (Marcus T. Reynolds) and St. Peter's Episcopal Church (Richard Upjohn and son Richard M. Upjohn).



Historic Albany Foundation was formed in 1974 to identify, protect, preserve and interpret such heritage assets and offers walking tours and many other educational programs regarding the city's vast collection of historic architecture and landscapes. The organization is working to preserve and reuse one of two remaining 18th-century Dutch buildings, the Van Ostrande-Radliff House.

Important to advancing cultural heritage tourism in Albany is the work of an 11-member collaboration called **Partners for Albany Stories (PAST)**. It has developed the first-ever interpretive plan for the city. The development process engaged representatives from several heritage sites, a team of key scholars, and community input.

Besides "visitor ready" sites, the asset inventory identified many other historic, cultural, architectural and archeological resources that can be considered "**almost ready**" for cultural heritage tourism. These may need expanded access, interpretation or development of visitor experiences to fully engage tourists on a regular basis. Additionally, several resources have **potential** but would require long-term or substantial development.

Events and festivals are also important attractions for visitors. The city, various organizations and New York State host a multitude of events each year that can be considered cultural heritage related. Just a few examples include: the Tulip Fest (30,000-60,000), Jazz Festival (8,000-10,000), 1st Friday citywide art exhibits, Alive at Five concerts on the Corning Preserve and events at the Empire State Plaza and New York State Museum.



Jazz Fest in the Corning Preserve on the Hudson River waterfront
(Photo: Albany County CVB)

Arts and cultural attractions abound in Albany. Some examples in Downtown:



Left: The **Grammy Award-winning Albany Symphony Orchestra** (Photo: Gary David Gold); above: Capital Repertory Theatre performance of "4000 Miles" (Photo credit: Doug Liebig)

Visitation by the Numbers

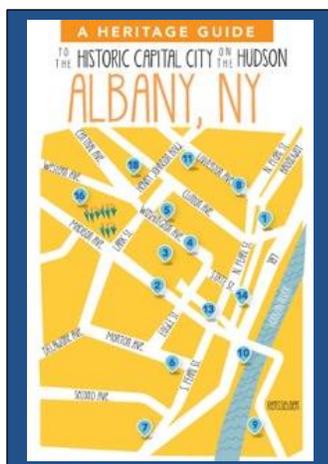
The City and County of Albany have attracted and hosted cultural heritage travelers for many years. Several sites attract substantial visitation as shown in the table below — especially from school groups. However, as the numbers reflect, some are facing declining attendance or considerable variability.

SOME KEY ALBANY CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES							
Attraction	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Albany Institute of History & Art	30,170	25,237	10,296	24,500	22,356	28,936	12,364
Crailo State Historic Site ¹⁷	12,984	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Empire State Plaza Observation Deck	20,908	19,394	23,439	18,606	24,113	17,934	27,834
Historic Cherry Hill	1,802	n/a	2,115	824	1,775	0	2,434
Irish American Heritage Museum	2,678	n/a	1,552	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
New York State Capitol—OGS Visitors Assistance	28,212	28,655	37,462	26,600	27,952	23,272	36,255
New York State Museum	526,000	513,157	507,812	588,565	691,873	383,784	774,432
Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site	6,169	6,181	6,732	6,682	4,840	6,637	5,345
Shaker Heritage Society	12,289	11,588	15,470	14,501	14,029	15,041	15,126

Source: 2014 Attraction Attendance Report, ACCVB; NYSM '14 visitation revision

While different factors contribute to declining visitation, three reasons have surfaced nationally and may be relevant here:

- Reduced hours of operation or sites not open during peak visitation periods (weekends, in particular) due to staffing or operational constraints
- Lack of new exhibits, programs or activities (diminishing interest in repeat visitation)
- Lack of marketing



This strategic plan addresses the need for Albany cultural, heritage, and tourism planners to collaborate in key ways, which may improve attendance for all. These include: expanding capacity, enhancing heritage tourism products (e.g., thematic tours, heritage trails, etc.), building on events to create greater synergies and promoting Albany’s cultural heritage tourism experiences.

Some work has already been done. To heighten the visibility of and visitation at key resources, *A Heritage Guide to the Historic Capital City on the Hudson ALBANY, NY* was developed in 2014 and recently updated.¹⁸ The guide has been popular with visitors, hotels and other venues and illustrates the kind of new tourism products needed.

¹⁷ Crailo is across the river from Albany. It is an excellent place to learn about Fort Orange.

¹⁸ Created by a committee led by Matthew Bender. Copies available from Historic Albany Foundation and hotels, heritage sites and venues in the area.

Examples of Albany's Cultural Heritage Assets

The many stories of Albany, and its role in the building of the state and nation, can be found in its remarkable architecture and cultural heritage assets. Authentic story-based experiences await the visitor — from tours, art, music and theater to cultural festivals and foods.



The New York State Capitol, a National Historic Landmark



Great museums with sweeping scope: The New York State Museum — housed in the Cultural Education Center (left) — and the Albany Institute of History & Art (right)



Great historic house museums tell the story of Dutch and English colonial settlement, the American Revolution and more.

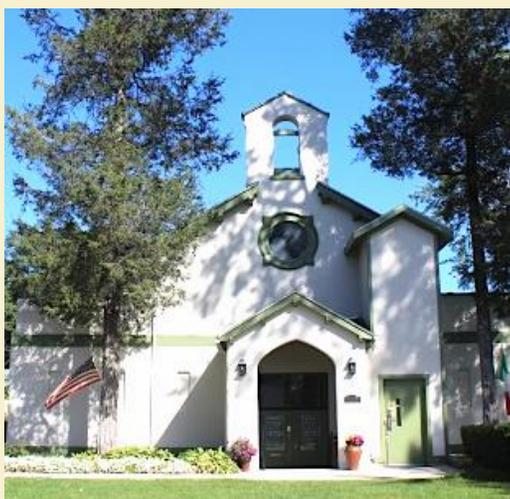


Top row from left: New York State Capitol, 1867-99 (Photo credit: New York State); The New York State Museum, established in 1870 (Photo: New York State Museum); Albany Institute of History & Art, founded 1791 (Photo: AIHA). **Bottom row from left:** Detail of Crailo State Historic Site, Rensselaer, 1707, later remodeled; Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, a National Historic Landmark, 1760s (photo for both: NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation); Historic Cherry Hill, 1787 (photo: Historic Cherry Hill); Ten Broeck Mansion, 1797-98 (Photo: Albany County CVB).

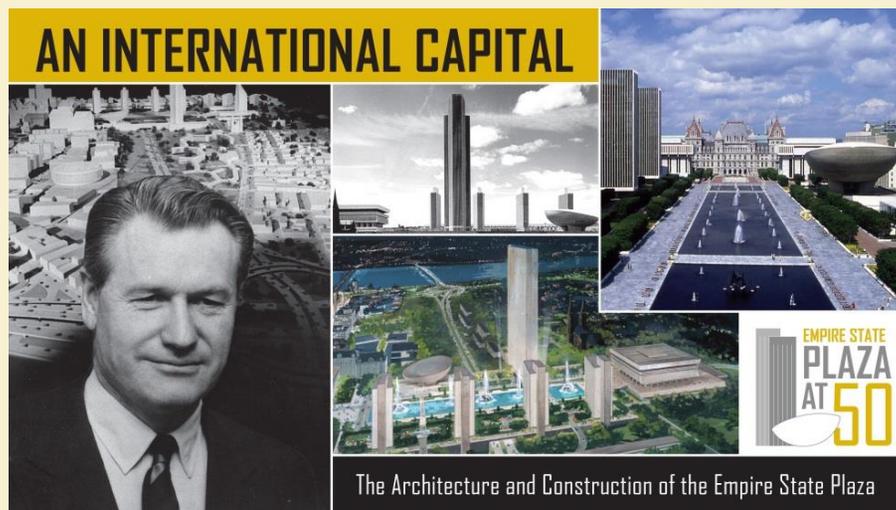
Stories of freedom, equality, dignity



Stories of immigrants – Irish, Italians & many others



The building of the Empire State



Top row from left: Shaker Meeting House, part of the Shaker settlement, founded 1776 (Photo: Shaker Heritage Society); a SHS volunteer making a Shaker broom (Photo: SHS); Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence and drawing of abolitionist Stephen Myers (Photo & image: Underground Railroad History Project); Event at African American Cultural Center of the Capital Region (Photo: AACCCR).
Bottom row left: American Italian Heritage Museum (Photo: Gene Loparco); Irish American Heritage Museum (Photo: IAHM); Empire State Plaza at 50 commemoration (Image: New York State).

SETTING THE STAGE FOR GROWTH

Desire for immersive experiences, increased use of technology, and growth in the sharing economy are just a few consumer trends impacting travel, and particularly cultural heritage tourism. Analyzing market research and keeping abreast of trends are important for increasing cultural heritage tourism visitation and economic impact. Work done by the Advisory Council, Working Group leaders and HTC Partners has yielded a useful foundation for framing discussion and future action. This data collection and analysis should continue as Albany's cultural heritage tourism is developed, enhanced and marketed.

Understanding Visitor Profiles and Preferences

Albany's heritage sites and attractions report their visitation data to the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACCVB). A few organizations collect data about their visitors beyond attendance but there has not been city-wide collection of primary data by the heritage tourism sites.



Visitors at Egas exhibition at the Albany Institute of History & Art
(Photo: Aine Leader-Nagy, AIHA)

As an effort to gain experience and create a snapshot of visitors to Albany, ten heritage sites and attractions participated in a **pilot research project**. A paper survey was distributed at all 10 sites noted below, and the ACCVB and New York State Museum sent a detailed electronic survey to members/subscribers.

- Albany Institute of History & Art
- Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center
- American Italian Heritage Museum
- The Capitol & Empire State Plaza, Office of General Services
- Historic Cherry Hill
- Irish American Heritage Museum
- Myers Residence/Underground Railroad History Project
- New York State Museum
- Schuyler Mansion
- Shaker Heritage Society



The carousel on the 4th floor of the New York State Museum is a popular stop for families (Photo: New York State Museum)

There were more than 400 respondents to the questionnaires. While this pilot was not statistically valid, the analysis did provide some interesting results to explore or clarify further.

Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan

- The State of New York was the primary origin market, but during the pilot survey’s three-week period the sites hosted visitors from 33 states and 12 countries. The top origin states were New York, Massachusetts, California, Texas and Florida for the Spring 2015 research cycle.
- Leisure/Vacation (40 percent) was the primary reason for visiting Albany, followed by Visiting Friends and Relatives (23 percent), Attend a Convention/Meeting/Event (11 percent), and Business (8 percent). School Field Trips was a key reason for groups traveling to Albany this spring.
- More than half were day visitors, with 30 percent spending 1-2 nights.
- Albany (likely a mix of city and county) received a favorable rating for the overall visit: 4.29 (on-site survey respondents) vs. 3.94 (respondents to the electronic survey) out of a scale of 1-5.

While the intent of most cultural heritage tourism programs is to attract new money into a destination — from out-of-town, out-of-state or international visitors — residents can be major motivators and influencers for increasing visitation.

This is suggested by the visitor survey referenced above where 23 percent said they were visiting friends and relatives. Attending other events, such as graduation or the Tulip Festival, also ranked high in motivation.

A study done in October by the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau found 8 percent of respondents were motivated to “visit friends/family.”¹⁹

The disparity in the results suggests the need to do further research at different times of the year with consistent survey questions for valid analysis. Nonetheless, ensuring residents are aware of and participating in cultural heritage activities year-round, along with visiting friends and family, helps sustain this important aspect of Albany’s quality of life.



Performance at Park Playhouse, Washington Park (Photo: T.R. Laz)

Trends in Cultural Heritage Tourism

Faced with increased competition, cultural heritage tourism planners and marketers can benefit from partnering with tourism industry experts to follow important trends that can enhance their efforts. Since a critical mass of attractions and activities are required to get travelers to a destination, Albany must look at how to develop and offer desired experiences — especially for the projected influx of convention delegates at the new Capital Center. Timely and comprehensive research will help ensure products and services are appropriately developed for today’s — and tomorrow’s — cultural heritage traveler.

Several trends are important and relevant for Albany to realize the desired development, marketing and management outcomes demonstrated by successful cultural heritage tourism destinations.

Desire for Immersive Experiences: **Passive experiences are passé**, as visitors want to do something meaningful, enriching or educational. Providing “immersive experiences” was listed as the

¹⁹ 2015 Advertising Conversion Study, ACCVB – October 2015.



The 2013 Soda Bread Competition held by the **Irish American Heritage Museum**. The museum has begun an initiative focusing on the preservation of Irish culture, heritage, and identity through food. (Photo: IAHM)

top consumer trend to watch in 2014 by JWT Intelligence,²⁰ and, has proven to be particularly applicable to travel. According to Group Tour’s media consultant Marlene Smith, **“Today’s traveler wants to build connectivity and engage with locals while creating their own new experiences and take away from their travels something intangible that they will keep forever.** People no matter what age or income demographic want to travel more intensely on a deeper emotional and more personal level.”²¹ U.S. Tour Operator Association’s President and CEO Terry Dale echoes this desire: “Travelers want to forge deeper connections to the people, traditions, and customs of the places they are visiting.”²²

Increased Use of Technology: More than three-quarters of all cultural heritage travelers use Facebook, and 40 percent use YouTube to help plan travel to destinations. Smart phone usage has surpassed use of tablets or desktops for trip planning and now is integral to on-site experiences as well. Recording activities and special moments, either by taking photographs or sharing on social media, has become a

primary use of smart phones. Cultural heritage travelers also use smart phones to learn more; more than one-quarter visit websites via a QR code accessed by smart phone and are three times more likely to use their mobile devices to learn about events, get recommendations.²³ Understanding the desired (and most appropriate) uses of technology is a major goal for cultural heritage tourism planners.²⁴

Regional Partnerships: Visitors don’t traditionally notice geographical or political borders, moving seamlessly across county and state lines. The advent of federally- and state-designated heritage areas reinforced the importance of these cross-border regional collaborations. Designing thematic trails to increase capacity and critical mass of activities allows cities like Albany to extend visitors on-site stays as they engage in more hub-and-spoke itineraries. Regional programs also foster opportunities for non-traditional partners to engage in tourism and leverage resources for greater return on investment.



“The Capital Craft Beverage Trail was formed to promote both tourism & local interest in the beer, wine, cider, and spirits produced in the Capital Region.

Membership includes producers from Albany, Rensselaer, and Schenectady counties. Our organization is heavily influenced by other successful beverage trails throughout the country, and we have benefited tremendously from the initiatives of Governor Cuomo and New York State.” *John Curtin, President*

²⁰ *10 Consumer Trends Report*, JWT Intelligence, December 2013.

²¹ Smith, M., *Wanted: the ‘Whoo-Whoot!’ Feeling*, Group Tour newsletter, July 2014.

²² Ibid.

²³ *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler, 2013 Edition*, Mandala Research, LLC, 2013.

²⁴ Ibid.

Flexibility, Food, Music and More: The rise of the sharing economy (Airbnb, Uber, SlideTour, etc.) and socially responsible shopping (museum stores to support mission-based institutions) are consumer trends worth watching, especially as to their impact on cultural heritage tourism. Other trends related to niche markets such as the increased interest in culinary tourism and music tourism are important to track.



Albany has a long history in the brewing and distilled spirits industries. Above: Beverwyck Brewing Co. tray at the Albany Institute of History & Art. (Photo: AIHA)

Food Tourism — where one learns about, appreciates and/or consumes food and drink that reflect the local, regional or national cuisine, heritage and culture — **is a new development theme for many destinations.** The 2013 *American Culinary Traveler Report*, published by Mandala Research, states that the percentage of U.S. leisure travelers who travel to learn about and enjoy unique dining experiences grew from 40 percent to 51 percent between 2006 and 2013. **Music tourism**, where visitors seek out specific artists or music-related events to experience, generated \$39.7 million in Austin, Texas in 2010 — 68 percent more than the average spent in comparable cities.²⁵

Distinctive Conventions and Meetings: Increasingly, this market segment is looking to historic sites and unique venues for off-property events. A city’s distinctive heritage and culture also help sell the destination to potential attendees, as the appeal of unique activities and atmosphere contribute to the marketability of the conference. The Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau has a contract for marketing the new \$66.5 million Albany Capital Center.



Rendering of Albany Capital Center (Image courtesy of ACCA)

The center will add state-of-the-art convention, ballroom and meeting space to the Capital Complex, which comprises 3 existing facilities, thus reportedly creating the “largest meeting space in Upstate New York” — a total of 158,000 square feet. According to a recent tip sheet for site selection by the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI), creative options and ideas are ideal for attracting today’s meeting attendees. “Incorporating the local flavor — cuisine, history, culture — into the meeting . . . provide a more unique experience for the attendees.”²⁶

Preparing for Conventions in Albany

A critical initiative is well underway in Albany to increase the hospitality culture related to the expansion of the convention center. The ACCVB hosted a Hospitality Summit in Spring 2015 to provide an update on construction of the Albany Capital Center. The event drew a large crowd of leaders from the hospitality industry and business sector along with elected officials, economic developers and the

²⁵ *Economic Impact of Music Tourism FY 2010*, Austin Texas.

²⁶ Lin, J., *15 Questions to Answer to Drive Site Selection*, DMAI, August 2013, <http://www.destinationmarketing.org/blog/15-questions-answer-drive-site-selection>.

community. The summit launched the **conversation about how Albany needs to be prepared to welcome over 80,000 visitors annually** when the Albany Capital Center opens in early 2017.

Following the summit, a task force composed of staff of the ACCVB, the Downtown Albany Business Improvement District, Central Avenue Improvement District, Lark Street Business Improvement District and Capitalize Albany have been spearheading efforts to increase the city's hospitality culture. They have focused on four pillars: Connectivity, Customer Service, Retail and Vibrancy. A snapshot of initiatives that have been discussed or advanced is provided in Appendix A.

These activities will also support cultural heritage tourism and help ensure the quality of hospitality is afforded all visitors to Albany and the Capital Region.

Albany SWOT Analysis

Following the extensive inventory of assets, a pilot survey of visitors to cultural heritage sites, and investigation of other plans and regional activities, the Advisory Council conducted a SWOT Analysis. This grid shows specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relevant to Albany's growth in cultural heritage tourism.

STRENGTHS

- Strong support from local elected officials
- Strong historic resource assets and leadership
- Important and diverse history, with stories from every century
- State Capital City and accessibility from major metro areas
- New collaborations among historic sites and tourism industry
- Locally based, one-of-a-kind dining options
- Many heritage-related cultural events and festivals
- Distinctive and accessible natural resources
- Walkability

OPPORTUNITIES

- Potential for increased visitation from convention center and downtown development efforts
- Potential for resident engagement and economic opportunity
- Trend: Heritage tourism continues to grow as an industry segment
- Trend: Desire for immersive experiences in urban centers
- Trend: Rise in culinary tourism and other niche segments of cultural tourism

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of awareness of Albany's historic assets and lack of a heritage brand and integrated marketing efforts
- Inconsistent hours/days at heritage areas
- Lack of coordination among stakeholders
- Perceived transportation and parking problems
- Lack of wayfinding and signage
- ACCVB budget is lower than competitors
- Limited access to the Hudson River

THREATS

- Future economic downturn could negatively impact travel
- Severe winters divert travel to other destinations
- Negative external perception of Albany (e.g. just a government town, scandals, hub to other destinations)
- Inadequate and highly competitive funding
- Lack of hometown pride among residents

This strategic plan specifically focuses on how to leverage strengths and opportunities related to cultural heritage tourism while overcoming weaknesses and minimizing threats. The SWOT Analysis also provided a list of areas to investigate in the Competitive Analysis to identify best practices and lessons learned.

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS

The growth in cultural heritage tourism nationally and internationally over the last 30 years has been exponential. According to the United Nations' World Tourism Organization, cultural [heritage] tourism stands out owing to its popularity, "which is faster than most other segments and certainly, faster than the rate of growth of tourism worldwide."²⁷ This increased popularity has resulted in increased competition and greater expectations from visitors. Seeking more relevance and also more immersive activities are high priorities of cultural heritage travelers today. Advance access to information and use of technology are also important to attracting savvy customers. To better understand Albany's competition, six destinations were investigated to determine if and how their *cultural heritage* is contributing to the local *tourism* impact.

For context, the table below shows the destination's population (city and county) and the economic impact of tourism overall. While visitation can be a benchmark, the economic impact is often more important when based on capacity and return on investment.

Destination	Population City/County*	Economic Impact from Tourism (City/County)
Albany, New York	98,424/ 307,428	\$883 million [§]
Annapolis, Maryland	38,722/ 556,348	\$3.3 billion ⁺
Boston, Massachusetts	645,966/ 760,093	\$10.626 billion [•]
Charleston, South Carolina	127,999/ 372,913	\$3.58 billion [^]
Providence, Rhode Island	177,994/ 630,171	\$1.637 billion ^x
Saratoga, New York	27,315/ 224,119	\$435 million [§]

* 2013 Estimate, US Census, census.gov
 § Tourism Economics: Economic Impact of Tourism in New York, 2012 Calendar Year
 + Tourism Economics: Maryland Office of Tourism's 2012 Economic Impact Study
 • MOTT Economic Impact Report, pp 27 - Table 15: Domestic Travel Impact in Massachusetts – Suffolk County 2012-2013 (US Travel Assoc.)
 ^ Office of Tourism Analysis, College of Charleston (2013) as sourced in Tourism Management Plan, and <http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20130617/PC05/130619542>
 X Regional computations from Rhode Island Tourism 2012 – IHS Consulting (2014)

The analysis of these destinations revealed some interesting and relevant lessons learned. These cities recognize the important role that architecture, historic sites and cultural resources play in defining and delivering distinctive (and authentic) experiences. Some cities have a better — and longer — track record of preserving and promoting such resources. Highlights of the findings are presented below.

Charleston is known for its historic architecture and environment. It also excels in leadership and management for cultural heritage tourism. Public-private-sector partnerships consistently plan and monitor activities to ensure a balance between visitors and residents. Now in its 7th version, the city's management plan directs the policies, procedures and practices that catapulted this South Carolina city into a cultural heritage class of its own. Innovative controls such as a "Tourism Court" and a lottery system for carriage tours help diffuse the impact of tourism in the historic district. The pro-active planning has paid off: **the city won the 2015 Conde Nast Traveler Reader's Choice Award for Top Small**

²⁷ UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture, February 2015, (<http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2015-02-06/unwtounesco-world-conference-tourism-and-culture-gathers-ministers-tourism>).

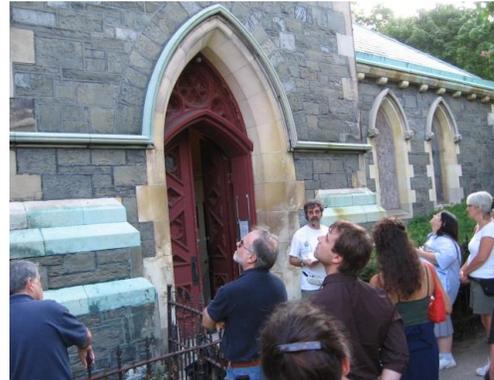
City in the U.S. (awarded the last five years) and ranked #1 for top city in the U.S. and Canada by *Travel + Leisure* in 2014. The tourism bureau's tagline, "Where History Lives," is preserved through continuing stewardship and investment.

Boston rose to a top heritage tourism destination with the creation of the **Freedom Trail** as a branded ribbon connecting 16 historic sites along a three-mile route, with special souvenir brochures and maps for sale. One of the most recognized trails in the country (and considered America's first historic walking tour), the Freedom Trail is popular with international visitors, convention goers and business travelers.

Annapolis is the anchor for the state-designated Four Rivers Heritage Area and is an exemplar of collaborative partnerships. The capital city prides itself on the largest selection of 18th-century brick structures of any American city and the longest continuously operating state capitol. This historic destination showcases and utilizes its important waterfront location in various promotions and events, targets boaters as a heritage tourism market and integrates/interprets maritime history for tourism

Several common elements of successful and sustainable cultural heritage tourism destinations emerged from the research.

- 1. The Importance of Historic Preservation and Authenticity:** Architectural character and preservation are critical aspects of cultural heritage tourism as evidenced by the appeal and brand of Annapolis, Boston, Charleston, Providence and Saratoga. Albany has great architectural character and a strong preservation community as illustrated.
- 2. Strong Partnerships:** Successful cultural heritage tourism destinations define and communicate roles and responsibilities to achieve the desired outcomes. Each partner entity is charged with a particular focus or responsibility that, when knitted together, ensure a holistic and seamless delivery of tourism experiences at a desired — and sustainable — standard of excellence. Annapolis partners with other members of the Four Rivers Heritage Area to provide unique regional hub-and-spoke tours and programs. This has led to new funding opportunities and the leveraging of resources to help visitors extend their stay and spending.



Tour of St. Joseph's Church, Ten Broeck Triangle by Historic Albany Foundation (Photo: HAF)



The former Delaware & Hudson Railroad Building serves as the offices of The State University of New York system. SUNY recently invested in improving the plaza in front and public access to this iconic historic structure. (Photo: State University of New York)

- 3. Research-Based Decision Making:** Routinely conducting and analyzing research helps to better understand customer (i.e., visitor, partner and resident) needs and wants. Tourism management plans, such as Charleston's, provide statistics to demonstrate the economic impacts of cultural heritage tourism

and also delve into the qualitative information to define areas for improvements. Capturing data on residents' opinions and customer satisfaction is equally important to balancing benefits and measuring return on investment. Boston routinely measures the impact of its visitors as a way to determine additional products and services as well as to recognize the importance of its attractions to the local economy. **In 2012, historic preservation and historic sites supported 86,000 jobs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; Faneuil Hall attracts 18 million visitors annually** and the USS Constitution has an annual attendance of 346,000. Enhanced community pride and quality-of-life benefits to residents are also important indicators for a successful destination. Measuring these impacts is a fundamental exercise for most competitive destinations.

4. **Quality Products:** While clever marketing may attract attention and visitors, these destinations recognize the importance of quality products such as tours, trails and packages. **Consistently positive experiences ensure delivery of the brand promise.** Quality products are consistent but not stagnant. The constant expansion and enhancement of cultural heritage products complement other activities — shopping, dining, lodging and recreation. **By diversifying and expanding the product mix, the city cultivates new and repeat customers.** Waterfire in Providence is recognized as a catalyst for tourism growth and brand awareness. Now in its 21st year, the event buoys downtown businesses, attractions and hotels as visitors seek out this unique event.
5. **Consistent Leadership:** Along with strong partnerships, leadership from government, the tourism industry, the cultural heritage communities and civic groups is critical to ensuring stakeholders stay engaged and focused on results. Leaders turn information into action and galvanize support to invest in and implement the cultural heritage tourism plan. **Charleston's Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. led initiatives that not only ensured sound stewardship but also a focus on local business development.** The launch of Spoleto helped position Charleston on an international culture stage. The introduction of Piccolo Spoleto ensured local artisans were recognized as important contributors to the city's cultural heritage community.
6. **Defined Management Structure:** Going hand-in-hand with effective leadership is creating an appropriate and clearly defined management structure for the specific city or locale. HTC Partners conducted research on the three cities noted above in this section as well as Providence and found great variety in structures. The city, county and state framework and existing relevant public- and private-sector organizations are critical to consider in creating an effective partnership that will work for a specific community. Breaking down silos and respecting the relevant roles of each partner are significant for successful communication and collaboration.

The HTC report, *Heritage Tourism Management Structures*, noted that the management of heritage tourism in destinations has significantly evolved over the last two decades. In the 1990s, 28 states and 14 cities had individuals specifically assigned to oversee heritage tourism (or cultural tourism as most cities called it). **Today, such management has shifted to where duties are more routinely spread across various departments and many diverse partners.**

The responsibilities have also expanded, focusing beyond the inventory of heritage sites and development to include more complex issues such as resources management, hospitality delivery, tourism policies, regulation and monitoring. Addressing the visitor experience holistically is also important. Thus, defined roles and responsibilities among partners, pro-active planning and monitoring of impact are critical to positive visitor experiences and high customer satisfaction.

MOVING FORWARD – KEYS TO SUCCESS

Based on information from the extensive research conducted and analyzed, the Advisory Council, along with key Working Group leaders, developed the following vision:

VISION 2020

The City of Albany and Capital Region are recognized as a top international cultural heritage tourism destination.

In 2020, the City of Albany and the Capital Region are an internationally recognized cultural heritage tourism destination with a strong preservation ethic, where residents promote their appreciation of place and community pride, and cultural heritage tourism robustly contributes to the region's economic vitality and growth.

The City of Albany and Capital Region's distinctive and authentic cultural heritage brand is a strong motivator for visitors, whether traveling to the Capital Region for business, leisure, a convention or event, or visiting friends and relatives.

- The consistent quality and availability of the region's dynamic, engaging and informative cultural, historic and place-based activities — evident in architecture, museums, cuisine, craft, and nationally significant stories — increases visitation, length of stay and spending.
- The positive impact of cultural heritage tourism is realized in increased lodging and local tax revenue generation, new jobs, enhanced quality of life for residents, civic pride, and preserved and protected historic sites framed by beautiful parks, a vibrant downtown, and attractive neighborhoods.
- Cultural heritage tourism is a catalyst for attracting new businesses and entrepreneurs to the region, as the destination is recognized for its authentic and engaging experiences.
- Local preservation, culture, history, and tourism organizations collaborate closely with city, county, municipal and state governments to ensure seamless delivery of quality experiences to residents and visitors alike.

MISSION

To grow and sustain cultural heritage tourism in the City of Albany and Capital Region through collaborative initiatives and innovative public-private partnerships.

Cultural Heritage Tourism Guiding Principles and Criteria for Priorities

In order to create specific goals, strategies and tactics, the Advisory Council considered the following guiding principles. These are the foundation for developing key metrics and performance indicators as benchmarks for success. The Council also considered specific criteria to prioritize the identified strategies to achieve the goals and realize the vision.

Albany's Cultural Heritage Tourism Guiding Principles

1. Cultural heritage tourism products are grounded in **authentic** stories, research and **sustainable** use of historic, cultural and natural assets.
2. Cultural heritage tourism programs foster **collaboration and stewardship**.
3. Cultural heritage tourism provides **positive economic benefits** to local, regional and state resources; its impact is further measured in its contribution to the **quality of experiences** and **sense of place** that **residents and visitors** value.
4. Cultural heritage tourism serves as a **catalyst** to attract the creative economy, new businesses and investment to all areas of the city and region.
5. Cultural heritage tourism activities reflect the **diversity** of the Capital Region and provide relevant experiences for various travel markets.



Gardens at Ten Broeck Mansion on Living History Day (Photo: Ten Broeck Mansion/Albany County Historical Association)

The strategic planning process generated more than 100 ideas for strategies and action steps. To help prioritize the most salient and sustainable actions, a framework was devised to assess the options available and help determine what is most important in the next three years. The criteria used follow.

Criteria Used To Prioritize Strategies:

- **Is it mission-centric?** *Does the strategy contribute to the realization of vision?*
- **Is it achievable?** *What will generate early wins with resources currently available?*
- **Is it sustainable?** *Preferably not a "one off" activity; instead, a project to launch and build on.*
- **Is it measurable?** *Especially focusing on the visitor experience, local economic impact.*
- **Is it fundable?** *Offers a reasonable expectation to break even, attract funders to offset costs or generate revenue.*

Understanding Cultural Heritage Tourism as an Eco-System

Finally, to help Advisory Council members visualize that cultural heritage tourism is an eco-system within the broader tourism framework, the graphic found in Appendix B was developed. Cultural heritage tourism uniquely depends on two core components to create and deliver the desired experiences: cultural heritage tourism product development and historic preservation. The marketing and management of cultural heritage experiences is critical to both planning and delivery of cultural heritage tourism products.

Funding and evaluation are vital to demonstrating a positive return on investment. Cultural heritage tourism relies on these components working together in sequence and harmony, each delivering its intended results.

GOALS, STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Introduction

To develop the recommendations, the Advisory Council drew on the solid foundation provided by the research and the Situation Analysis, along with the guiding principles and criteria for priorities. The Council refined a wide array of possibilities into **3 major goals: Promote and Expand, Preserve and Protect, and Fund and Manage — as well as 12 strategies and 35 tactics.**

Before presenting them by section, it is important to reinforce some overarching points.

- **Albany has an excellent foundation of cultural heritage assets** to tell the many stories of the city, region, state and nation. **Owning specific stories** such as related to Dutch heritage, transportation history and the building of the Empire State can advance Albany’s public recognition as a major cultural heritage destination.
- **Packaging and promoting these attractions is a major priority** in moving forward. Adding components to existing signature events can strategically expand visitor experiences. Successful marketing will result in new visitors, extended stay and spending and a rise in repeat visitation.
- **Helping other historic sites and cultural attractions become “visitor ready”** is important to building a diverse collection of quality experiences. It may also stimulate growth in capacity, skills and jobs while engaging a wider community.
- **Preserving, protecting and maintaining cultural heritage assets** are critical to long-term sustainability. Good stewardship requires effective policies, sufficient funding, sound management and a supportive community.
- **The successful implementation of this strategic plan entails strong leadership**, effective partnerships, coordination and communication, and sustainable funding. An essential step is establishing the management structure to map out and implement roles and responsibilities. Funding will be needed for all aspects — e.g., operations, products/projects, marketing and preservation.
- **Starting out, the management structure must be tiered** until funding and leadership are consistently available. Building a case for cultural heritage tourism will be particularly important in the first year. Focusing on measurable activities that demonstrate success and value can help lay the foundation for future growth.



A city of contrasts – the Corning Tower and Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Photo: Albany County CVB)



The USS Slater, a National Historic Landmark, is the last destroyer escort afloat in the US. (Photo: USS Slater, Destroyer Escort Historical Museum)

GOAL 1: PROMOTE AND EXPAND

Promote and expand Albany’s existing cultural heritage experiences

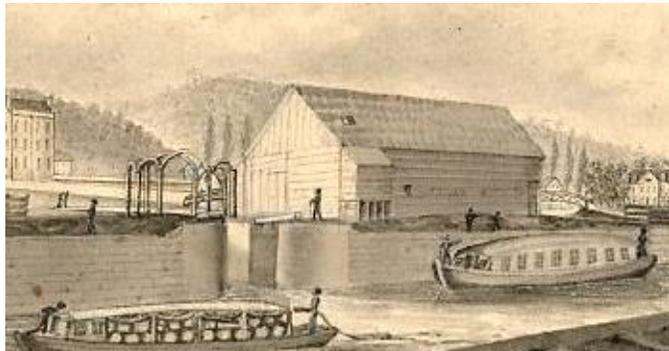
Strategy 1.1 Share Albany’s distinctive, authentic cultural heritage stories through innovative and engaging visitor experiences.

Tactic 1.1.1: Partners establish and adopt a prioritized list of themes to use for developing cultural heritage tourism experiences. See Appendix C.

Tactic: 1.1.2: Foster partnerships among stakeholders to develop cultural heritage experiences involving multiple locations.

STRENGTHS FOR TELLING ALBANY’S STORIES

Native American Culture
Dutch Exploration and Settlement
American Revolution
Building of the Empire State, Political History
Shaker Settlement
African American Experience
Architecture – Historic to Modern
Art – Historic to Modern (e.g. Hudson River School, Rockefeller Collection, current work)
Cemeteries (e.g. Albany Rural Cemetery)
Food and Distilling/Brewing
Immigration
Industries – Past and Present (from the fur trade to nanotechnology)
Neighborhoods
Parks, Gardens and Landscapes (e.g. Washington Park, Thacher Park)
Technological Innovation
Transportation and Waterways (e.g., Hudson River, Mohawk River)



Example: Transportation History

Leverage nationally significant anniversary years in transportation history to showcase Albany and the region’s role as a gateway to building the nation: e.g., the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the construction of the Erie Canal (2017), and possibly the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad (2019). Above: Detail from the “The Entrance of the Canal into the Hudson at Albany Taken in 1823,” James Eights Artist, date: 1823. (Image: Albany Institute of History & Art)

Strategy 1.2 Enhance the “visitor readiness” and quality of existing and emerging cultural heritage assets.

Tactic 1.2.1: Draw on best practices to develop a visitor readiness scoring system for Albany’s cultural heritage sites and implement through a review body established for this purpose.

Tactic 1.2.2: Conduct an annual review to determine visitor readiness and areas for improvement at current cultural heritage sites.

Tactic 1.2.3: Establish a mentoring program providing technical assistance to sites for improvements identified through the review process.

Tactic 1.2.4: Encourage the alignment of hours of operation at existing cultural heritage tourism sites to facilitate visitors' experience of more than one site per trip. (Smaller institutions staffed by volunteers might schedule monthly programs at a set day/time to reduce staffing impact.)

Tactic 1.2.5: Encourage sites to use on-line registration, ticketing and on-site purchases.



Tactic 1.2.6: Conduct evaluations (e.g., exit surveys, follow-up questionnaires) to determine customer satisfaction; use visitor and resident evaluations to change and enhance heritage tourism products.



Tactic 1.2.7: Develop and host an annual tour guide training program to ensure accurate content for use in tours. Create informational materials for instruction and reference.

Examples of interpretative programs: Top right: Coopers at work, Historic Cherry Hill (Photo: HCH); Left: Candle dipping at Crailo State Historic Site (Photo: NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation)

Strategy 1.3 Add new high quality cultural heritage tourism products and services available to visitors.

Tactic 1.3.1: Leverage the impact of Albany signature events by adding a cultural heritage tourism component, or expanding components, to extend visitor stays and spending. Develop new experiences to expand on the strength of stories and assets.



Street Scrubbing – a tradition of the annual Albany Tulip Festival. (Photo: Albany County CVB)

Example: The Dutch In Albany

- Build on the city's annual Tulip Festival
- Collaborate on adding an event to the annual New Netherlands Seminar held in the fall
- Celebrate Dutch American Heritage Day (created by Congress and officially celebrated on Nov. 16) by offering new events with Nijmegen, Gelderland, one of Albany's Sister Cities
- Create a trail, stockade footprint or other visual aids to mark the city's Dutch roots from 1609 to Albany's charter as a city by the British in 1686
- Contribute to work by Crailo and Schuyler Mansion state historic sites, NYS Museum and others on the Dutch and slavery in Albany/the area
- Bring partners together to explore options

Tactic 1.3.2: Pilot a theme tour with regional partners to advance cultural heritage tourism in the Capital Region.

Tactic 1.3.3: Conduct market research to determine visitor profiles and interests as well as cultural heritage tourism trends (e.g., determining the interests of college students and their families in collaboration with local colleges and universities).

Tactic 1.3.4: Create a multi-site attraction pass to provide value-added for visitors; make available for advance sales on individual partner/ACCVB websites.



Visitors at the Whimsicality exhibition at the Albany Center Gallery (Photo: ACG)

Strategy 1.4 Increase the visibility of Albany’s cultural heritage sites, events and activities via signage, infrastructure improvements and web presence.

Tactic 1.4.1: Establish and monitor criteria to define and categorize “cultural and heritage tourism” sites, events and tours — along with contributing restaurants, hotels and services — for use by the ACCVB, on signage, etc. (E.g., use of the new icon for cultural heritage tourism)

Tactic 1.4.2: Inventory all interpretive signage in Albany, detailing condition, language and location, and include a photograph of each site as a basis for identifying gaps, the need for maintenance, removal, etc.

Tactic 1.4.3: Plan, design and install new interpretive signage for cultural heritage tourism — ensuring heritage tourism is reflected in any new directional signage to instruct pedestrians, motorists and motorcoaches on access to cultural heritage sites and events.

Strategy 1.5 Market Albany’s cultural heritage assets and products to increase visitation.

Tactic 1.5.1: Create a development and deployment plan for content and images to be presented on the web and at visitor venues.

Tactic 1.5.2: Develop and distribute collateral materials for visitors (guide books, brochures, catalogs, websites, apps) with the new heritage tourism icon — see at right — and a consistent design approach and messaging.

Tactic 1.5.3: Use shared language on individual heritage websites with links directing visitors to ACCVB’s website.

Tactic 1.5.4: Develop an annual comprehensive calendar of existing cultural heritage tours, programs and activities for 2016 and beyond.



New logo identifies cultural heritage sites on the ACCVB website. (Photo: Albany County CVB)

Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan

Tactic 1.5.5: Use all social and traditional media platforms to expand awareness of Albany's cultural heritage tourism programs and events.

Tactic 1.5.6: Host tour guides and tour operators at cultural heritage assets and programs as part of an annual educational familiarization tour program.

GOAL 2: PRESERVE AND PROTECT

Preserve and protect Albany’s cultural and heritage assets for present and future generations

Strategy 2.1 Ensure that effective preservation policies and practices are included in existing comprehensive and/or economic development plans.

Tactic 2.1.1: Prepare and submit to relevant agencies a list of specific recommendations for enhancing or expanding historic preservation policies, funding and procedures. Encourage inclusion in updates of plans and policies.

Strategy 2.2 Compile and assess a comprehensive list of operational and preservation needs for cultural and heritage assets to prioritize funding requests.

Tactic 2.2.1: Prepare a baseline assessment of heritage sites and their sustainability and preservation needs (e.g., preservation of collections, heating and cooling, technology and human resources) to assure consistent access for visitors.

Tactic 2.2.2: Create a public awareness campaign to demonstrate the importance of preservation to cultural heritage tourism. Develop the campaign to coincide with National Preservation Week, held annually each May.



Rowhouses in Washington Park Historic District, (Photo: NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation)



At the Albany Shaker historic site, volunteers from the Northeast Woodworkers Association built a new bridge across Shaker Creek. The project unified the site and facilitated pedestrian walkability. (Photo: Shaker Heritage Society)

Historic Preservation in the City of Albany

- There are **6 National Historic Landmarks** and **15 Historic Districts** on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Albany is in the New York State Heritage Area system** (originally the Urban Cultural Park system), and is **part of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor**, designated by Congress in 1996 and 2000, respectively.
- **Since 1974 Historic Albany Foundation** has worked to identify, protect, preserve and interpret the city’s historic architecture and landscapes.
- The **City of Albany Historic Resources Commission** preserves, protects and enhances through review and regulation.

GOAL 3: FUND AND MANAGE

Establish the management and funding structure to implement the strategic plan

Strategy 3.1 Build on the ongoing work of the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACCVB) to help advance city cultural heritage tourism priorities established in the strategic plan.

Tactic 3.1.1: The City and ACCVB revise their current contract — ACCVB to provide staffing support such as a coordinator to help address agreed upon needs (e.g. cultural heritage tourism product development). Establish a multi-year time horizon.

Strategy 3.2 City to establish an Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism partnership entity to serve as the central coordinating body to implement the strategic plan.

Tactic 3.2.1: Engage all key partners including: the ACCVB, City of Albany, Albany Institute of History & Art, Capitalize Albany, Downtown BID, Partners for Albany Stories, Historic Albany Foundation, New York State Museum, SUNY, the Hudson River Greenway, and, tourism, hospitality, civic, business, higher education, arts/culture, government and other leaders.

Tactic 3.2.2: Formalize partner contributions (e.g. in-kind or financial support, personnel, products) in a written agreement. Determine roles and responsibilities to coordinate efforts.

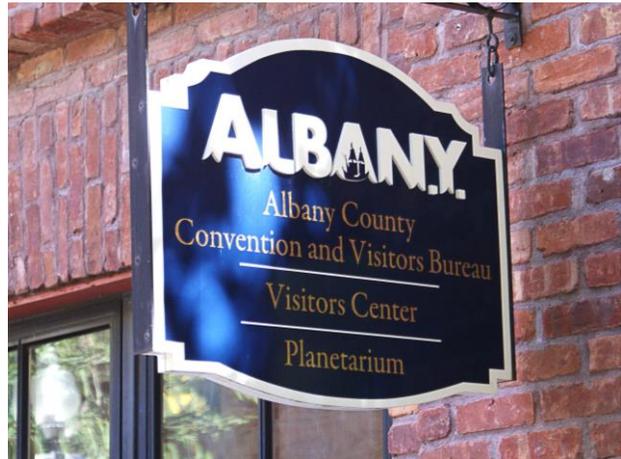
Tactic 3.2.3: Define and administer the operating system to communicate regularly with partners, oversee coordination of experience development and marketing and manage the evaluation of activities.

Strategy 3.3 Partnership entity to serve as a resource to Capital Region communities on developing their cultural heritage tourism programs and plans.

Tactic 3.3.1: Engage with communities to advance cultural heritage tourism in the region, identifying common interests, needs and opportunities.

Tactic 3.3.2: Partner with regional and state organizations and initiatives where Albany can participate or contribute with cultural heritage tourism products, services and/or expertise.

Tactic 3.3.3: Offer reciprocal opportunities for neighboring communities, attractions and businesses to engage with Albany and expand offerings of hub-spoke package tours.



Top: Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau sign (Photo: Albany County CVB).

Strategy 3.4 By 2018, establish a dedicated Director position and strengthen staffing and partners as needed.

Tactic 3.4.1: Sustain the Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism program through a formalized, dedicated staff, a partnership entity, funding and program of work.

Tactic 3.4.2: Assess and refine the reporting relationship, communications and coordination among partner organizations and staff.

Strategy 3.5 Partnership entity to develop and administer a sustainable, diversified funding model to implement the strategic plan.

Tactic 3.5.1: Identify and evaluate fundraising options to achieve the action goals of the plan — product development, preservation, marketing, capital improvements — while also building sustainable funding for operations and the measurement of impact. Administrative support to run, oversee and evaluate operations can be built into all funding strategies. See examples of funding options in Appendix D.

Tactic 3.5.2: Identify top priorities among needs identified in the plan, develop a succinct case for support, determine applicant agency and assign a fund-raising team.

DOCUMENTING THE IMPACT

One of the most important strategies is to document and assess the outcome and impact of cultural heritage tourism. Monitoring and measuring the impact of projects and programs are vital to evaluating the contributions of cultural heritage tourism against the investment of human and financial resources.

Critical to success and sustainability is an understanding of how success will be measured. **Five metrics or performance indicators are recommended for evaluating programs, activities and outcomes.** While qualitative indicators — such as positive social and environmental impacts — are important, the following metrics are central to quantifying and attributing economic impacts to cultural heritage tourism. These performance indicators also measure the value of cultural heritage tourism to marketing and branding the destination.

HOW WILL SUCCESS BE MEASURED?

- **Growth in visitation**
- **Growth in spending**
- **Increase in visitor inquiries**
- **Increase in publicity and engagement**
- **Increase in visitor satisfaction**

Measurement protocols should be developed and implemented to benchmark these performance indicators.

The implementation of the plan should include **establishing an annual system of evaluation** as soon as feasible for partners. It will require collaboration among the cultural heritage sites and established research programs (in particular, the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau's market research) to monitor visitation, customer satisfaction and engagement and local economic impact.

Additionally, **qualitative research should be scheduled to assess new programs and events** in order to obtain customer feedback and recommendations for improving the next series for product delivery.

Some research can be conducted internally to monitor progress and maintain the course for implementation of this plan. Other analysis may be scheduled in tandem with partners to leverage existing research for tourism and/or economic impact models. Additionally external contractors (e.g., local universities, organizations and/or private consultants) can do research to provide an independent look at progress or issues to help ensure objectivity.

The goal for all research is to demonstrate the value and contribution of cultural heritage sites to tourism and the achievement of the vision.

CONCLUSION: THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW

Tourism is an important part of Albany County's economy. Traveler spending in 2013 was \$893 million. In a six-county area, 7.4 percent of all employment was generated by tourism — 6.9 percent in Albany County. **National data provide evidence of the value cultural heritage tourism can add to tourism overall** such as the fact that, on average, U.S. cultural heritage tourists spend more and stay longer than general leisure travelers.

The City of Albany has a major opportunity to help expand the **economic impact of tourism for the city, county and region** by using its cultural heritage resources to greater advantage. They are of national and international caliber and span a rich collection of architecture, museums and heritage sites, parks and landscapes, arts and culture activities, festivals and events, stories, traditions and more.

Albany, the Capital City of the Empire State, is one of America's First Cities and should claim its position in a major way in the settling of the state and nation. The city's authentic cultural heritage assets, if further developed and promoted collectively, can help realize the city's potential as a major tourism destination, create a dynamic "sense of place" distinctive from other destinations and revitalize neighborhoods as well as commercial districts.



Photo credit: Gary David Gold

Albany can also be a resource and driver to help grow cultural heritage tourism in the Capital Region — a region very rich in such assets as well.

The Vision 2020 set out by the Advisory Council — the recognition of Albany and the Capital Region as a top international cultural heritage tourism destination — requires leadership, investment and organized efforts. To achieve it, efforts must be coordinated and focused on 3 goals: 1) Promote and Expand, 2) Preserve and Protect, and 3) Fund and Manage.

Research conducted through the strategic planning process revealed the **importance of Albany staying "authentic."** Rather than replicating activities offered at other cities, Albany can best achieve its desired brand by celebrating its unique stories.

Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan

Collaboration is critical, with both formal and informal partnerships essential to the implementation phase. **Each stakeholder group has a contribution to make** — the cultural heritage community, the tourism industry, business, government, higher education, non-profits, neighborhood organizations and civic groups. All will need to join together to share the responsibilities entailed in this strategic plan. Through a committed partnership, the outcomes will be stronger, reflect greater community diversity and benefit residents and visitors alike.

The keys to success over the short- and long-term are set out in this plan:

- An aspirational yet realistic vision
- A dedicated leadership and management team and a formalized partnership
- Engagement of all stakeholders including residents
- Short-term successes to demonstrate the value of cultural heritage tourism
- Market research to identify visitor demographics, interests, trends and satisfaction as well as viability for new products and services
- Strategies to build, sustain and preserve cultural heritage resources and tourism for future generations
- Diversified and sustainable funding
- Documentation and measurement of outcomes

The time for action is now. At the heart of it all is the critical need for establishing a lead organization — i.e., the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau — and a committed partnership as the central coordinating body to implement the plan. Initial staffing support is also essential. Launching specific product development and marketing activities — as recommended in this plan — will create synergies of effort and grow opportunities for many.

The Advisory Council's process has already helped build momentum and relationships for advancing cultural heritage tourism in the city and beyond. Albany can now be a catalyst for new economic opportunities through cultural heritage tourism, enriched quality of life and an increased pride of place for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

Appendix A

Hospitality Task Force



The Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACCVB) hosted a Hospitality Summit in the spring of 2015 where the hospitality industry, business leaders, elected officials, economic developers, and the community at large received an update on construction of the New Albany Capital Center. This was the start of conversations about what Albany, as a city and community, needs to do to be prepared to welcome over 80,000 visitors annually starting in January 2017 when the complex opens.

From that initial meeting staff of the ACCVB, the three BIDs and Capitalize Albany have been discussing how to increase our hospitality culture in the city. Listed below are the four pillars this group is focusing on:

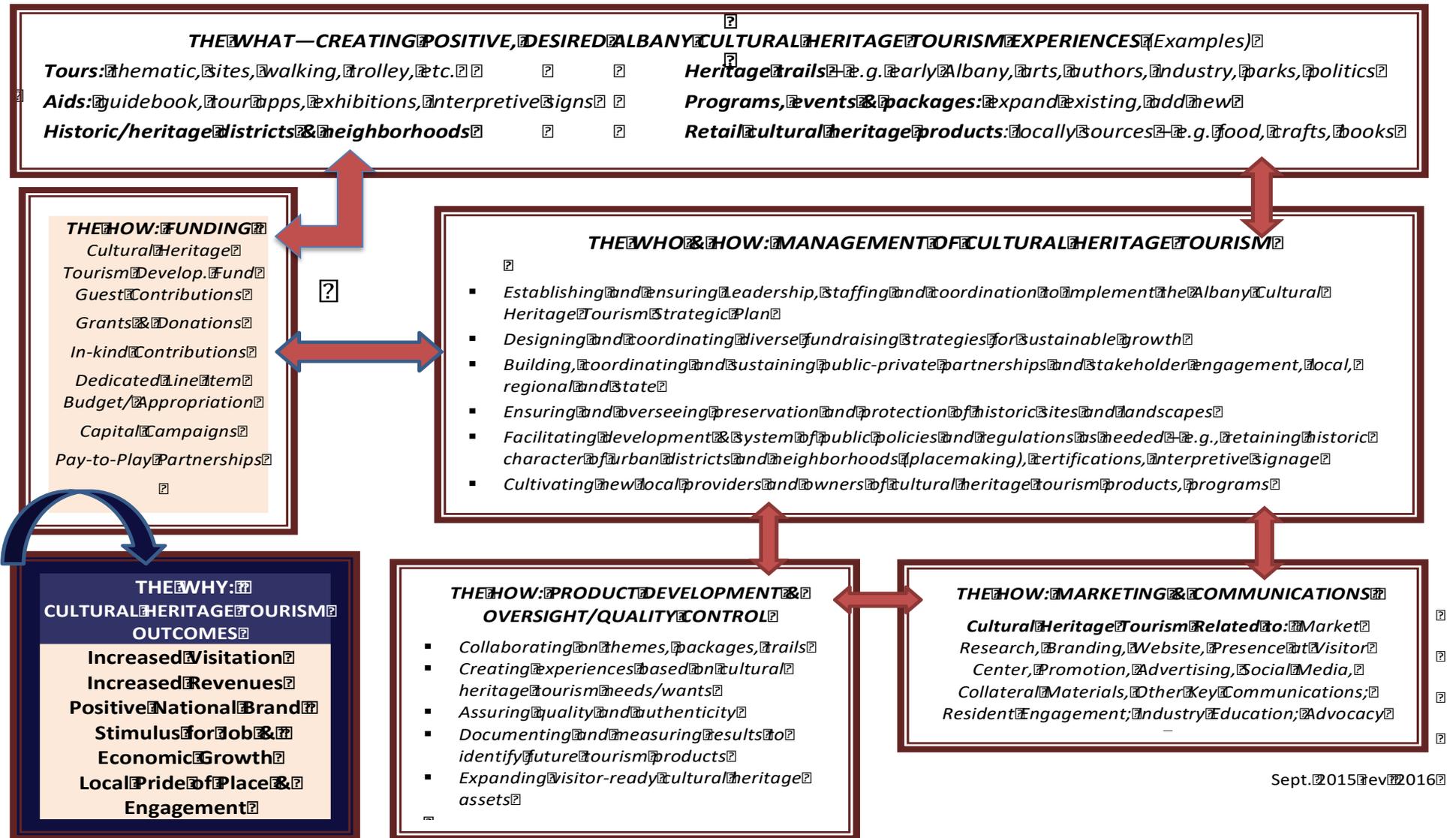
- **Connectivity**
 - Wireless service in downtown — City assessing current needs to apply for NYS funding, understanding hotels’ policies for internet, charging stations in Downtown
 - 100 Walk Your City Signs (<https://www.walkyourcity.ORG/CAMPAIGNS/1573>)
 - Region-wide taxi management
 - Exploring the funding and management of a trolley
- **Customer Service**
 - Developing more tasting tours and samplings to get hospitality staff into BID restaurants
 - Big Apple Greeters — Looking to bring this program that operates successfully in NYC (where group of volunteers are trained to provide various tours) to Albany and other Upstate NY cities
 - Gold Service Training — Training classes for hotel staff on customer service
 - Touch-screen kiosks with visitor information being placed at the airport, Visitors Center, Capital Center, Times Union Center, and the NYS Museum
- **Retail**
 - Increasing businesses’ web presence: Google, Yelp, social media
 - Façade Improvement Grant Program
 - Connecting local businesses with SMG’s Preferred Vendor Program
- **Vibrancy**
 - Gateway projects
 - Mural projects — Parking garages and the corner of Madison Ave and S. Pearl St.
 - Wrapping of traffic signal boxes with local artwork
 - Amenities — New and maintenance of existing
 - Street trees
 - Events calendar for hospitality related activities

(October 2015)

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ELEMENTS OF THE ALBANY, NY CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN

Building Albany's Cultural Heritage Tourism Eco-System within the Overall Tourism Framework



Sample of Themes – Albany, Region, State

Partners for Albany Stories	NYS Heritage Area System ²⁸	PATH THROUGH HISTORY <i>Heritage Tourism in the Capital Region: Vision Plan</i> ²⁹
<p>Albany: A Hub of Access, Opportunity and Power With 5 subthemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Convergence of Cultures</i> • <i>Struggle, Conflict and Resistance</i> • <i>Climate of Creativity</i> • <i>Building the Empire State</i> • <i>Influence and Innovation on the Nation’s Stage</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albany — <i>Business & Capital</i> • Schenectady — <i>Labor & Industry</i> — “The Electric City” • Riverspark (Troy, Cohoes, Colonie, Green Island, Waterford and Watervliet) — <i>Labor & Industry</i> • Saratoga — <i>Natural Environment</i> — “Queen of the Spas” • Whitehall — <i>Defense</i> 	<p>“The history of New York State is the history of America. Since its early beginnings, New York has played a key role in the nation’s growth and development . . .” Regional aspects of the story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Americans • European exploration of North America • Region as a hub for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Immigration and trade ○ Transportation and manufacturing ○ Recreation and agriculture ○ Technology & learning ○ Waterways as super highways ○ Significant military sites ○ Scenic and historic resources ○ Vibrant neighborhoods and community centers, striking architecture and working landscapes <p>Regional themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Conflict and Settlement</i> • <i>Military Heritage</i> • <i>Freedom & Dignity</i> • <i>Commerce & Industry Heritage</i> • <i>Working Landscapes</i>

²⁸ From *Heritage Tourism in the Capital Region Vision Plan*, Capital Region Workgroup May 2013, PATH

²⁹ Ibid.

Sources of Funding for Cultural Heritage Tourism

Grants: Compile a list of potential grants along with grant deadlines. Apply collaboratively to best prospects — e.g., in June, apply through the Combined Funding Application process of the Capital Region Economic Development Council.

Membership: Explore the potential of establishing a membership-based revenue program on a sliding scale drawing on best practices.

Signature Annual Fundraiser: Consider creating a signature event that both provides funding for priority needs while also increasing awareness of the region’s cultural heritage assets. Work to avoid competing with other events locally.

Program/project funding: Cultivate corporate, foundation and governmental entities for cultural heritage tourism programs and projects.

Pay-to-Play: Historic sites join tourism industry partners by investing both financial and human resources to create programs and tours desired by visitors. The up-front investment is repaid through advance sales of programs, revenue generation from sales of private label products or advertising on marketing sites.

CrowdFunding Campaigns: Create an on-line campaign for raising funds for specific projects, identifying some incentive for donors. Use social media and direct outreach to attract investors. Sites include Kickstarter, AuthenticAmerica.com, GoFundMe, etc. A campaign in Vermont is using GoFundMe for an African American Heritage Trail.

Hospitality Industry: Work with hotels to explore ways to provide mutual benefit, such as through special promotions or other strategies. To support the St. Simons Land Trust, Sea Island Company has donated, via a voluntary \$2 nightly contribution added to guests’ bills, over \$770,000 (as of December 2008.)

Source: Content provided by HTC Partners



Photo Credit: Gary David Gold

Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2018

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This full strategic plan and an **Executive Summary** are both available at: www.albanyny.org

Contact: Office of Mayor Kathy M. Sheehan • Phone: (518) 434-5100 • Email: mayor@albanyny.gov



From left: John Boyd Thacher State Park, along the Helderberg Escarpment, (Photo: Albany County CVB); Sugarman Sculpture with children playing, Empire State Plaza (Photo: Miriam Tremontozzi); Nipper (Photo: Albany County CVB)