

Tourism & Culture

2009

What is the Tourism & Culture Element?

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan incorporates the Principles of Geotourism, by the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations, as guidelines for the Tourism and Culture Element.

Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.

The Principles of Geotourism define sustainable tourism as the following:

- It involves the community
- It informs both visitors and hosts
- It benefits residents economically
- It supports integrity of place
- It means great trips for visitors

Five Principles for Successful & Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism

- **Collaborate** - More can be accomplished by working together than by working alone
- **Find the Fit** - Travelers are seeking out experiences that are distinctive
- **Make Sites & Programs Come Alive** - The human drama of history is what visitors want to discover, not just names and dates
- **Focus on Quality & Authenticity** - Our area is unique, and its special charm is what will draw visitors
- **Preserve & Protect** - It is essential to protect historic and cultural assets for the long term

Community Vision for Tourism

Shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities that attract visitors to a city also attract future residents. When someone considers moving to Westminster, they not only look at housing and job opportunities, but they also look at the quality of overall choices in entertainment and recreation. Potential residents want to move to diverse communities that offer a variety of options to occupy their leisure time, such as ice skating, bowling, dinner theatres, art galleries, and dog parks. Also, potential companies prefer to locate in an area where there is a good quality of life to offer to their employees.

Local businesses suffer when residents choose to leave Westminster to find the shopping or dining experiences that they enjoy patronizing but cannot find here. How do we attract the quality shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities to keep residents in the city? Some residents suggested that the City could develop its own “branding” or identity that could be used for marketing and promotional purposes.

A unique image, brand, or identity for Westminster could set the pace for attracting the quality shopping, dining, and entertainment opportunities that residents want here in their hometown, as well as to attract tourists and future residents. Some residents described a future where Westminster is known as a “cultural city,” with a focus on the arts and education.



Part 1: Tourism Patterns

Tourism plays a significant role in the economy of Westminster and Carroll County. According to an economic impact study prepared by the Travel Industry Association of America, tourism is a \$57 million a year industry in Carroll County. In 2006, the Carroll County tourism industry employed almost 710 people, generating more than \$18.1 million a year in payroll. The Carroll County Office of Tourism reported in the County's 2008 Economic Development Annual Report that the County's 20 signature events drew nearly 228,245 attendees. The office also reported that tourism interest in Carroll County continues to rise, as shown by a 25% increase in unique visitors the Tourism Office's website.

Statewide statistics in 2006 indicate that the average visitor to Maryland travels with at least one other person from their household, stays 1.4 nights and spends \$305 during their visit. A motor vehicle is the primary mode of transportation for 88% of the travelers to Maryland, while 8% travel by air. 71% of Maryland visitors travel for pleasure and another 29% journey to the state for business purposes. The number one activity for Maryland visitors is dining, followed by shopping, visiting beaches, visiting historic sites and museums, participating in outdoor activities, and attending cultural events or festivals.

A key ingredient to a visitor's experience is the quality and availability of lodging. Three hotels and motels operate within Westminster and two inns provide unique lodging opportunities. While availability of lodging appears to be adequate overall, times of potential shortages exist, such as when the Baltimore Ravens utilize one hotel during their summer training camp or on weekends of large events at McDaniel College.

Part 2: Historic Westminster

Section 1: Historic Downtown Westminster

Downtown Westminster provides a unique shopping, dining and cultural experience within an historic, small town setting. Main Street is pedestrian-friendly, with wide sidewalks and mature street trees, providing residents and visitors with a relaxed atmosphere to embark on a shopping excursion. With a broad mix of local retail and personal service establishments, including several regionally recognized specialty shops, Downtown Westminster is a vital tourist attraction. There is an assortment of art galleries, boutiques for women, gift shops, "Do It Yourself" stores for crafters and hobbyists, bookstores

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for the bookworm, including a comic book and religious book store, and many other shops for visitors and residents to explore. Numerous locally-owned restaurants and eateries not only feature fine regional cuisine but also great ethnic food. Many of our downtown sit-down restaurants offer seasonal outdoor dining opportunities in the forms of patios, porches and decks. With two parking decks and numerous surface lots, Downtown Westminster has ample parking for residents and visitors alike. Perhaps, all of this helps explain why Downtown Westminster is a nationally accredited Main Street Program.

Section 2: Civil War History

The Civil War historical sites and reenactments draw many visitors to Westminster. Both Union and Confederate troops passed through the City on route to the Gettysburg battlefield and the Big Pipe Creek area, where a battle was planned but never occurred. This area is unique for historians because there were both Union and Confederate sympathizers in Westminster, and this division among families and neighbors provides a perspective on the issues prevalent in the Border States during the Civil War. The railroad in the center of town was a major supply line for Union forces, the old Union church was used as a hospital for soldiers, and Fairground Hill served as a prison camp.

Corbit's Charge was a small but important cavalry skirmish that took place in Westminster on June 29, 1863 that is remembered as a significant factor in slowing down J.E.B. Stuart's march to Gettysburg. Historians have wondered whether the results of the battle of Gettysburg might have been different if Stuart arrived before July 2, 1863. In recognition of the importance of Corbit's Charge, the City of Westminster began an annual commemoration of the event in 2003. The event has grown in popularity every year, with over 1500 in attendance in 2009.

The Carroll County Office of Tourism has developed self-guided walking and driving tour brochures that describe Westminster's role in the Gettysburg campaign. In addition, the State of Maryland established a Maryland Civil War Trail in 2003. As part of the trail, four sites in and around Westminster have been designated with Civil War Trail markers and educational signs. A map showing the entire Gettysburg Campaign, and a sign describing Corbit's Charge, is displayed at the Historical Society campus at 206 East Main Street. Other signs are posted at the Old Courthouse, at the intersection of East Main and Liberty Streets, and at the Farm Museum.

Section 3: Heritage Tourism

With heritage tourism benefiting the Maryland economy second only to water-related tourism, the Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program was established in 1996 to build on the existing heritage tourism industry in Maryland. Heritage tourism focuses on historic preservation and areas of natural beauty with economic development as the primary goal.

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area participates in the Maryland Heritage Areas Program, which encourages a region's residents, businesses, governments and nonprofit organizations to join together

in broad-based, public-private partnerships to preserve, enhance, promote and celebrate their historic, cultural and natural resources. Operating under the auspices of the Tourism Council of Frederick County, Inc., a not-for-profit organization, the Heart of the Civil War is guided by a 21-member Advisory board comprised of representatives of local government units, state and national parks, and private organizations from all three heritage area counties: Carroll, Frederick, and Washington.

Management and marketing of the heritage area is overseen by the three-county partnership with staff housed at the Tourism Council of Frederick County, Inc. Nonprofits and local governments through creative partnerships undertake development and enhancement of heritage tourism products in the Heart of the Civil War, guided by the heritage area Management Plan, and often with grant funding made possible through the Maryland Heritage Area Authority. Westminster adopted the Management Plan in 2006 allowing the County to be eligible for Maryland Heritage Area Authority project grants and Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area mini-grants. All proposed projects should align with the goals and priorities described in the Management Plan.

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area promotes the stewardship of historic, cultural, and natural Civil War resources, encourages superior visitor experiences, and stimulates tourism, economic prosperity, and educational development, thereby improving the quality of life of our community for the benefit of both residents and visitors.

Part 3: Main Street Community

Main Street Maryland is a comprehensive downtown revitalization program created in 1998 by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Westminster was designated a Main Street Maryland Community in 1999 and since then has been a driving force in the tourism industry of Westminster.

Section 1: Main Street Approach & Principles

The Main Street Maryland approach emphasizes the importance of working simultaneously in the following areas:

Design: Enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging compatible new construction and long-term planning

Organization: Building consensus and cooperation among the many groups and individuals who have a role in the revitalization process

Promotion: Marketing the traditional commercial district's assets to customers, potential investors, new businesses, local citizens and visitors

Economic Restructuring: Strengthening the district's existing economic base while finding ways to expand it to meet new opportunities and challenges from outlying development

Clean, Safe, And Green: Enhancing the perception of a neighborhood through the principles of Smart Growth and sustainability

Section 2: Main Street Promotions & Events

As part of the Longwell Parking Deck/ Locust Lane Renovation Project, the City constructed an information kiosk at the Longwell Parking Deck and a bulletin board under the Locust Lane sign at the East Main Street entrance. Downtown events are posted monthly, along with downtown maps, providing the location of public lots, and other pertinent information. Downtown event calendars are included in the Downtown Westminster brochures available at all Maryland Welcome Centers, Westminster City Hall, and various locations in the downtown area.

Main Street Events that attract visitors and residents to Downtown Westminster:

- **Lunch on the Lane** – June Concert Series
- **Songs at Six** – July Concert Series
- **Midnight Madness** – Downtown Stores Open to Midnight
- **Downtown Holiday Parade** – Winter Festival
- **Starlight Shopping** – Holiday Parade
- **Santa's House** – Christmas

Part 4: Department of Recreation & Parks Events

Public parks and recreation facilities are often the "engines" that drives tourism in many communities. The Westminster Department of Recreation and Parks organizes over 30 events and programs a year, some events in partnership with local organizations, with all events benefiting the tourism industry of Westminster. Many of the events are located in parks, while some parks are themselves attractions; other events are located along Main Street. The Department of Recreation and Parks supports the following City Events that attract 1,000 or more attendees:

Westminster Flower and Jazz Festival

Time of Year: Annually the Saturday before Mother's Day

Estimated # of Participants: 6,000-8,000

Description: The Flower and Jazz Festival has been held in Historic Downtown Westminster every May, since 1988. Since its beginnings, the street festival has been geared toward celebrating moms and spring, with both local and out-of-state vendors featuring not only plants and flowers, but jewelry and crafts, too. There are also over 100 craft vendors displaying a wide of variety of unique items.

Art in the Park

Time of Year: June

Estimated # of Participants: 1,000

Description: Westminster's Art in the Park has always been held on the grounds surrounding City Hall since it began in the mid-1980s. It is a juried venue that provides local and regional artists and artisans a chance to exhibit and sell their work in a relaxed, festive atmosphere. In 2009, the event featured more than 80 talented artists. It is a festival of visual and performing arts featuring dozens of the region's most talented painters, photographers, and fine craft artists.

Commemoration of the Anniversary of Corbit's Charge

Time of Year: June

Estimated # of Participants: 1,500

Description: Organized by the Corbit's Charge Commemoration Committee and the Pipe Creek Civil War Round Table, the Corbit's Charge Commemorative Weekend occurs the last full weekend in June. The event provides a quality educational experience for visitors of all ages through a Civil War encampment; performances of period music; participation of authentic Civil War living historians and traditional artisans; guided tours and the presentations of published authors, speakers and museum displays.

Month of Sundays Concert Series

Time of Year: Every Sunday in July

Estimated # of Participants: 12,000

Description: The "Month of Sundays" Concert Series has been held every year in July, since 1994. This popular event brings great entertainment to the public at Westminster City Park. The concert series is presented in joint cooperation with the City of Westminster Recreation and Parks Department, Carroll County Department of Recreation and Parks, and the Human Services Programs of Carroll County, Inc.

Westminster Fallfest

Time of Year: September

Estimated # of Participants: 40,000

Description: The City of Westminster's signature event is the annual Westminster Fallfest. It is also Carroll County's largest community charity event. Each September, Fallfest draws over 40,000 people to Historic Downtown Westminster. Families enjoy the festival midway and rides, while others come for the great food, unique shopping, and heart-stopping entertainment. The event begins with a parade, followed by four days of non-stop fun.

Part 5: Tourism & Culture Programs

Section 1: The Carroll County Farm Museum

The Carroll County Farm Museum, located at the edge of the City on South Center Street, attracts large numbers of visitors to the Westminster area. Activities at the Farm Museum typically include tours of a 19th Century farmhouse with period furnishings, demonstrations by crafts people such as blacksmiths and spinners, and exhibits of farm machinery. The Farm Museum has also hosted a significant number of special events, including the Maryland Wine Festival (over 23,000 in attendance in 2008), Annual Spring Muster and Antique Fire Equipment Event, Civil War Living History Encampment, July 4th Celebration, American Music & Arts Festival, Blacksmith Days, and Fall Harvest Days. Adjacent to the Farm Museum is the Carroll County Agricultural Center, which is home to a number of events including classes and the Carroll County 4-H Fair.

Section 2: Local Farms & Farmers' Markets

Tourist-related agricultural activities include farmers markets and “pick-your-own” produce farms. The Westminster’s Farmers’ Market is open from 8:00 a.m. to Noon on Saturdays, from the last Saturday in May until the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Local farmers and bakers sell fresh seasonal vegetables and fruits, potted flowers, herbs, raw and hand-spun wool, eggs, and baked goods with more goods and crafts added every year. A second farmers’ market in the Westminster area is the Carroll County Farmers’ Market held on Saturdays at the Agricultural Center. This market includes a mix of fresh produce, prepared foods, and crafts. People who prefer to pick their own fruits and vegetables can visit Baugher’s Orchards, just off MD Route 140 to the north of Westminster.

The City of Westminster will continue to promote the Westminster Farmers’ Market as not only an asset to the tourism industry but to the local economy as well. The popularity of farmers’ markets is increasingly becoming a key driver of local economic development. Activities such as visits to farms and farmers’ markets, fruit picking and agricultural farm accommodations may provide important supplemental activities to rural areas or small towns. Some of the benefits of farmers’ markets include opportunities to:

- Showcase local produce and local products
- Encourage visitors from other areas to visit Westminster
- Promote local and regional areas for tourism and business
- Incorporate other Westminster community events
- Provide small businesses a place for distribution and visibility
- Contribution to local economy by keeping money local

Section 3: Arts & Culture Neighborhood

Nationally, as well as in Maryland, the arts attract audiences, spur business development, support jobs and generate government revenue. In 2007, Americans for the Arts, the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts, released its third national report on the nonprofit arts industry in the United States. "Arts & Economic Prosperity III: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences" documents the economic impact of the nonprofit art and culture sector in 156 communities nationally. The study demonstrated that this growing industry is a cornerstone of a thriving tourism economy and that the nonprofit arts industry generated \$166.2 billion in economic activity for 2005.

Westminster benefits from local arts and culture organizations that add value to the tourism economy. The Carroll Arts Center is operated by the Carroll County Arts Council, a local nonprofit organization. The Center is a multi-purpose community arts facility that features a theatre and the Tevis Art Gallery. McDaniel College, a local private institution, has degree programs in Art and Art History, as well as a degree program in Theatre Arts. WMC Alumni Hall Theater and the Esther Pranglely Rice Art Gallery are located at McDaniel College. The Carroll Arts Center and McDaniel College provide wonderful arts and culture facilities that serve as critical anchors for the Tri-Street Neighborhood.

The Tri-Street Area Advisory Committee was established by the Mayor and Common Council on August 25, 2008 to address neighborhood issues and concerns in the area of Pennsylvania Avenue, Union Street and West Main Street, with the objective of creating an action plan for improvement. Under the goal of building economic vitality, the Tri-Street Advisory Committee recommended the creation of a task force called the "Arts and Culture Task Force," to develop an "Arts, Culture and Small Business Overlay Zone" for the Tri-Street Neighborhood.

The "Arts and Culture Task Force" was appointed by Mayor Kevin Utz in October 2009. The task force will convene its first meeting in November 2009. The focus for this group is to develop and promote the Westminster Arts and Culture Neighborhood, along with the Arts, Culture and Small Business Overlay Zone, to enhance the economic vitality and quality of life for residents of the Tri-Street Neighborhood.

Author Tom Borrup describes 10 economic and social capital development strategies in his book, "The Creative Community Builder's Handbook: How to Transform Communities Using Local Assets, Arts, and Culture." The Westminster Arts and Culture Neighborhood will be developed and promoted using Borrup's following strategies as guidelines:

1. **Create Jobs:** Nurture artists and small cultural organizations as businesses and microenterprises to increase employment
2. **Stimulate Trade through Cultural Tourism:** Create the right conditions for, and engage in, cultural tourism to bring new resources to the community

3. **Attract Investment by Creating Live/Work Zones for Artists:** Support artists and artist live/work spaces as anchors around which to build local economies
4. **Diversify the Local Economy:** Cluster arts organizations as retail anchors and activity generators to attract and support other enterprises
5. **Improve Property and Enhance Value:** Leverage the proximity of cultural amenities and the artists' touch to improve property and increase its value
6. **Promote Interaction in Public Space:** Engage people in public spaces through public art and collective cultural experience
7. **Increase Civic Participation through Cultural Celebrations:** Strengthen connections between neighbors through cultural celebrations and festivals
8. **Engage Youth:** Include young people in civic affairs and enterprises through meaningful work and activity
9. **Promote Stewardship of Place:** Develop civic pride and responsibility through good "place making" and design practices

Part 6: Tourism & Culture Partners

Section 1: Carroll County Office of Tourism & Visitor Center

The Carroll County Visitor Center is located in Downtown Westminster, at 210 East Main Street. Staff members are available to answer questions and send requested information to potential visitors. The mission of the Visitor Center is to provide information to visitors of Carroll County in order to increase their appreciation and knowledge of the County, including the Westminster area. The Visitor Center has knowledgeable staff that will assist visitors to plan a full-day or multiple-day trip. The Visitor Center offers brochures and maps for many sites in the County, along with brochures for other counties in Maryland.

Section 2: Tourism Council of Carroll County

The Tourism Council of Carroll County, Inc. is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to promoting and developing tourism in Carroll County. The membership is made up of a diverse group of business people and non-profit organizations from the communications, marketing, lodging, restaurant, and retail industries along with professionals from many other fields. These business people, through their common goal of promoting tourism, have enhanced their opportunities to increase business. The Tourism Council's primary mission is to promote Carroll County as a travel destination, in full partnership

with the Carroll County Office of Tourism. This includes press releases, radio and TV spots, newspaper articles and paid advertisements.

The Tourism Council, with the assistance of the Carroll County Office of Tourism, publishes the County's official visitor's guide, "Visit Carroll County." In 2008, the Council had 140,000 copies of this publication printed for distribution throughout the State via the Maryland Welcome Centers and the Westminster Visitor Center. This guide provides information on the accommodations, restaurants and attractions in the County. In attracting tourists to Carroll County, the Tourism Council helps bring revenue to the Westminster area. According to the Maryland Office of Tourism, the Carroll County tourism industry generates approximately \$57 million each year, making it one of the County's leading industries.

Section 3: Carroll County Arts Council

The Carroll County Arts Council is located in the magnificently renovated Carroll Arts Center, formerly the Carroll Theatre in downtown Westminster. The art deco building now houses a 263-seat theatre, the Tevis Gallery, two art classrooms and offices. The purpose of the Carroll County Arts Council is to serve citizens and visitors by acting as a link between the arts community and education, business, government, the media, and the private sector.

As an advocate for the arts and culture tourism industry of Westminster, the CCAC produces public programs, grants and scholarships and serves as a primary source for cultural information in Carroll County. The Carroll Arts Center is located in the heart of the arts and culture community of Main Street. The Center hosts dozens of events throughout the year that attract residents and visitors to spend time in Downtown Westminster. Held annually, the Festival of Wreaths in December and the Peep Show in April, are the Carroll Arts Center's most popular events. These events support the importance of art in the community by encouraging all residents to share their artistic talents.

Section 4: Maryland State Arts Council

The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) is an agency of the State of Maryland, under the authority of the Department of Business and Economic Development, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts. Since it was established in 1967, the purpose of the Council has been "to create a nurturing climate for the arts in the State" as stated in its founding legislation. The Council is an appointed body of seventeen citizens.

MSAC awards grants to not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations for ongoing arts programming and arts projects. MSAC awards grants to individual artists, and provides technical and advisory assistance to individuals and groups. The Council also carries out programs of its own to enhance the cultural life of the residents of Maryland.

The MSAC is dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive. In 2007, non-profit arts organizations and arts programs that received operating support from the MSAC contributed more than \$1.2 billion to the State's economy and provided 15,000 jobs to Maryland residents.

The mission of MSAC is to encourage and invest in the advancement of the arts for the people of our State. The goals of the Council are to support artists and arts organizations in their pursuit of artistic excellence, to ensure the accessibility of the arts to all citizens, and to promote statewide awareness of arts resources and opportunities.

Imagine Maryland

In 2008, the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) launched a broad-based and inclusive strategic planning process to help guide its work titled, “Imagine Maryland: A Strategic Plan for the Arts 2009-2013.” The purpose of “Imagine Maryland” is to acknowledge current concerns, embrace future dreams and solicit practical ideas from a diverse cross section of individuals and organizations affiliated directly and indirectly with the arts and culture sectors of Maryland.

Recognized as having one of the most robust and supportive environments for the arts in the country, Maryland’s creative sector has grown in both nature and number during the past decade. The dynamic growth of arts institutions, emerging artist collaboratives, and thriving “Arts & Entertainment” Districts have made Maryland a focal point for artists, art enthusiasts and a host of creative enterprises.

“Imagine Maryland” is a strategic plan to promote the arts, in Maryland, as essential to maintaining and strengthening the connections between citizens and communities, to enhancing education, and to the building the economic viability and physical attributes of communities.

Section 5: Historical Society of Carroll County

Founded in 1939, Historical Society of Carroll County (HSCC) has been an active partner in the heritage tourism industry of Westminster. HSCC is dedicated to the research of piedmont Maryland's cultural heritage and the preservation and interpretation of objects significant to Carroll County history. The mission of HSCC is to sponsor educational programs, research projects, exhibitions, publications, and community outreach programs to provide broad public access to this region's cultural heritage.

HSCC’s tourist attractions are historical properties maintained by the Historical Society, including the Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House, the Kimmey House and Cockey's Tavern. The Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House (1807) was renovated to display the daily activities of a family of Pennsylvanian Germans, a significant community in Carroll County in the early nineteenth century. The Kimmey House serves as HSCC's administrative facility and houses the HSCC research library and the Shriver-Weybright Exhibition Gallery. Cockey's Tavern opened to the public in 2009 and houses the expanded museum shop, as well as extra public programming space for the HSCC.

Section 6: McDaniel College

McDaniel College, formerly known as Western Maryland College and founded in 1867, is a private liberal-arts college located along the western end of Main Street. The college enrolls 1,600 full-time

undergraduates and close to 5,000 graduate students. New or potential undergraduate students are often accompanied by their families when traveling to the college, providing an established group of visitors to Westminster. The campus also hosts events that attract non-student visitors. These events include concerts, theatrical productions, conferences, sporting events, and summer sports camps for middle-school and high-school aged students.

Since 1994, attracting a variety of artists from around the world, McDaniel College's Common Ground on the Hill has been an asset to the arts and culture tourism industry of the City of Westminster. Common Ground on the Hill is seen as a multicultural community of musicians, artists, writers, lecturers, actors, and dancers from around the world, who come together every summer to share skills with students of all ages and with one another. The mission of Common Ground is to improve communities and the world, by sharing and celebrating art and cultures on "common ground."

McDaniel College also serves as the summer home of the Baltimore Ravens. The National Football League team holds its annual summer training camp on the McDaniel College campus from late July to mid-August. Attendance at the Ravens' training camp was over 80,000 in 2008; which significantly contributed to the sports tourism industry of the City of Westminster.

Section 7: Carroll Community College

Carroll Community College (CCC) supports the arts and culture tourism industry of the City of Westminster. CCC hosts art exhibitions in a variety of media and styles by students and regional and nationally celebrated visual artists. The college holds these exhibitions in three venues. The Gallery in the Robert A. and Phyllis B. Scott Center for the Fine and Performing Arts is dedicated to the exhibition of exciting contemporary works by artists of regional as well as national renown. Exhibits in the Great Hall Gallery generally focus on local groups and highlight the diverse nature of their work. The Langdon Family Gallery is an intimate space devoted to the work of individual artists.

Carroll Community College also offers many opportunities for residents or visitors to enjoy music and theatre performances. Most of the performances are held in the 425-seat theater of the Robert Annis and Phyllis Barrett Scott Center for the Fine and Performing Arts that opened in 2002. Other performances are held outside at the Rotary Amphitheater that was completed in 1998 and started the college on its way to fulfilling its goal of becoming a cultural center for the performing arts.

Part 7: Tourism & Culture Strategies

Section 1: Cultural Heritage Tourism

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has developed five basic principles for successful and sustainable cultural heritage tourism:

Principle 1: Collaborate

More can be accomplished by working together than by working alone. Successful cultural heritage tourism programs bring together partners who may not have worked together in the past.

Principle 2: Find the Fit

Travelers are seeking out experiences that are distinctive, not homogenized. They want to get the feel of a very particular place or time. Westminster can supply that experience, and benefit in the process—but only if the City cultural heritage tourism program is firmly grounded in local circumstances.

Principle 3: Make Sites & Programs Come Alive

Interpreting sites is important, and so is making the message creative and exciting. Westminster should find ways to engage the five senses of visitors, as the more visitors are involved, the more they will retain.

On average, visitors will remember:

- 10% of what they HEAR
- 30% of what they READ
- 50% of what they SEE
- 90% of what they DO

Principle 4: Focus on Quality & Authenticity

The true story of the City of Westminster is the one worth telling. The story of the authentic contributions previous generations have made to the history and culture of Westminster will interest visitors, because that is what distinguishes the City from other places. The authenticity of the community adds real value and appeal. The Westminster area is unique, and its special charm is what draws visitors.

Principle 5: Preserve & Protect

When historic and cultural assets are at the heart of plans to develop tourism, it is essential to protect them for the long term. Prevent irreplaceable structures from being destroyed or damaged beyond repair, but instead make sure that they are preserved and protected as they deserve. By protecting the buildings, landscape or special places and qualities that attract visitors, Westminster can safeguard its future.

Section 2: Geotourism

Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents. Geotourism adds to sustainability principles by building on a destination's geographical character, its "sense of place," to emphasize the distinctiveness of its locale and benefit to visitors and residents.

The National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destination has developed the following six principles to of geotourism or sustainable tourism:

1. **Become synergistic:** All the elements of geographical character work together to create a tourist experience that is richer than the sum of its parts, appealing to visitors with diverse interests.
2. **Involve the community:** Local businesses and civic groups join to provide a distinctive, authentic visitor experience.
3. **Inform both visitors and hosts:** Residents discover their own heritage by learning that local assets they take for granted may be interesting to outsiders. As local people develop pride and skill in showing off their locale, tourists get more out of their visit.
4. **Benefit residents economically:** Travel businesses hire local workers, and use local services, products, and supplies. When community members understand the benefits of geotourism, they take responsibility for destination stewardship.
5. **Support integrity of place:** Destination-savvy travelers seek out businesses that emphasize the character of the locale. In return, local stakeholders who receive economic benefits appreciate and protect the value of those assets.
6. **Create great trips:** Enthusiastic visitors bring home new knowledge. Their stories encourage friends and relatives to experience the same thing, which brings continuing business for the destination.

Section 3: Public Art Tourism

The City of Westminster is will be working with the Carroll Arts Council to develop a Public Art campaign that promotes public art projects throughout the community. Public art, broadly defined, encompasses artwork placed in a public context such as on the street, in a park, on the exterior of a building or within the common spaces of a public building. Quality public art projects can help unify neighborhoods and build community identity.

Planning for public art projects includes a diverse group of residents whose concerns and knowledge will be invaluable for producing public art projects, such as:

- artists
- architects and planners
- arts and cultural organizations (staff, board, volunteers, users)
- neighborhood associations
- business groups
- community activists
- educational institutions
- elected officials and their representatives

In addition to conducting interviews and meetings to gather information and test ideas, the public art projects require information gathered from existing documents, which might include:

- a cultural plan
- neighborhood plans
- design guidelines
- tourism and visitor bureau reports
- economic development plans
- redevelopment plans

Section 4: Sports Tourism

The City of Westminster Recreation and Parks Department is partnering with the Carroll County Recreation and Parks Department to develop a Sports Tourism Strategy to include in the Westminster Recreation and Parks Master Plan. The overall vision of the Sports Tourism Strategy is to host tournaments, camps and clinics that would bring visitors and revenue to Westminster.

In addition to the economic benefits for direct service businesses, such as service stations, eating establishments and hotels - building a sports' tourism industry for the Westminster area will have numerous positive impacts for the City. These positive impacts include increased community spirit, the development of a highly skilled volunteer base, and increased positive exposure for Westminster and Carroll County.

Section 5: Geocache Tourism

The City of Westminster participates in the Maryland Municipal League (MML) Geocache Trail. On January 1, 2009, the MML became the first state league in the country to launch a statewide city/town geocache trail. MML is using this innovative approach to promote awareness of, and visits to, Maryland's cities and towns, with the goal of helping to stimulate economic development in Maryland's municipalities. This effort taps into the rapidly growing high-tech tourist trade which is not limited to

any particular age group. Discovering a geocache, is very much like going on a treasure hunt using a hand-held GPS (Global Positioning System) to plot map coordinates to locate the treasure or "cache."

A geocache trail is a series of geocaches tied together by a common theme. The theme of the Maryland Municipal League Geocache Trail is "Celebrating Maryland's Cities and Towns." The trail is comprised of 78 city/town caches located in the 11 MML Districts throughout the State. In addition to the MML Geocache Trail, there are more than 25 other geocaches within two miles of the intersection of Main Street and Railroad Avenue. The City of Westminster plans to include geocache tourism in future promotions.

Section 6: Town Gown Tourism

The City of Westminster recognizes McDaniel College and Carroll Community College as valuable assets to the tourism and culture identity of Westminster. The concept of Town Gown Planning is based on collaborative community planning processes that improve the well being of all residents living in communities that surround higher educational institutions. In addition, the purpose of Town Gown Planning is to develop a successful partnership between the City and the College as well as promote the benefits that the City provides to the College and the value the College brings to the City.

Office of University Partnerships

In 1994, HUD established the Office of University Partnerships (OUP) in an effort to encourage and expand the growing number of partnerships formed between colleges and universities and their communities. OUP recognizes the crucial role these collaborations and partnerships play in addressing local problems and revitalizing our nation's communities.

The Office of University Partnerships strives to support and increase these collaborative efforts through grants, interactive conferences, and research that help achieve the Office's three primary goals:

1. Provide funding opportunities to colleges and universities to implement community activities, revitalize neighborhoods, address economic development and housing issues, and encourage partnerships
2. Create a dialogue between colleges and universities and communities to gain knowledge and support of partnership activities and opportunities as well as connect them to other potential partners and resources
3. Assist in producing the next generation of urban scholars and professionals who are focused on housing and community development issues

Benefits of a College Town for Local Tourism Industry

College towns provide a higher quality of life by promoting and supporting activities that ensure cohesive communities that are safe, healthy and enjoyable. The benefits of a college town for the local economy and tourism industry include:

- College towns are attractive places for real estate investments
- The steady stream of students and visiting professors ensure a good rental market
- Job markets are helped along by the well educated populations
- Many people retire to college towns, drawn by the cultural and sporting events, etc.
- Development opportunities abound in college towns
- Growth potential, property values, cost of living, atmosphere, intangibles and overall investment potential

Tourism & Culture Element

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan promotes tourism as a key component of economic development for the City of Westminster. The same qualities of life that attract tourists to an area also attract new businesses and jobs, as well as provide a thriving community for current residents. Tourism can sustain or enhance the character of a place. The character of Westminster is built on the culture of the community, which includes the environment, aesthetics, heritage, and well-being of Westminster residents. The Tourism and Culture Element presents ideas on how tourism can help market the natural assets, culture, and history of Westminster, which is good for attracting new businesses and for increasing community amenities.

Goals & Objectives

Goal C1: Promote a “Destination Westminster Strategy and Plan” to ensure a quality visitor and resident experience

Objective 1: Evaluate the current tourism industry of the Westminster area

- a. Conduct an assessment of visitor trends and impacts in the Westminster area
- b. Perform an analysis of factors that now dissuade visitors from extending their stay in the Westminster area
- c. Identify all of the activities that are occurring within the community to improve the visitor experience, and identify missing components
- d. Determine opportunities to support, coordinate, and facilitate efforts of the existing tourism industry
- e. Meet with representatives of local recreation and cultural attractions that contribute to the economic vitality of Westminster to identify issues and opportunities

Objective 2: Develop a “Destination Westminster Strategy and Plan” that is understood and accepted by the community

- a. Create tourism development goals that build on Westminster’s natural and cultural resources.
- b. Incorporate the principles of Geotourism and Culture Heritage Tourism into the “Destination Westminster Strategy and Plan”

- c. Monitor the success of the “Destination Westminster Strategy and Plan” and then communicate the results of its efforts to the community

Goal C2: Partner with the Carroll County Tourism Office to enhance the image and identity of Westminster as an attractive destination in the travel marketplace

Objective 1: Encourage cooperation among the key assets and businesses that provide recreational and cultural attractions for local residents, as well as visitors

- a. Identify Westminster’s key assets and local retail, recreation and cultural businesses that support the tourism and entertainment economy of Westminster
- b. Host an annual meeting of representatives of the key assets and businesses to provide opportunities for coordination of local attractions and events
- a. Develop a strategy and a commitment to preserve and enhance key assets
- b. Nationally and regionally market Westminster’s key assets

Objective 2: Increase length of stay and spending of visitors to the Westminster area.

- a. Initiate a reporting process for the average length of stay at local hotels
- b. Develop a method to study the impact of local events on local Westminster businesses
- c. Prepare an annual report on how local events in the Westminster area effected the local economy in order to address issues and opportunities

Goal C 3: Promote cooperative efforts between public agencies and private organizations to present a unified image of Westminster

Objective 1: Partner with the local colleges to market Westminster as appealing to visitors and residents, as well as to students and college faculty

- a. Collaborate with local colleges and community representatives to develop a “Town-Gown Plan”
- b. Orient McDaniel College and Carroll Community College students to the resources, attractions, and amenities of Westminster, as well as to upcoming events

- c. Market McDaniel College and Carroll Community College's attractions and events to the residents and visitors of Westminster

Objective 2: Cooperate with the Carroll County Historical Society to enhance Cultural Heritage Tourism in Westminster

- a. Work with the Carroll County Historical Society to educate the public on the importance of preservation and protection of historic buildings for tourism
- b. Promote the Carroll County Historical Society's events and activities that enhance the historic image of Westminster and that attract visitors
- c. Partner with Carroll County Historical Society to market Westminster as part of the Civil War Heritage Area

Goal C4: Create an environment for tourists that is welcoming, friendly, and easy to navigate for visitors and new residents

Objective 1: Ensure that informational material and maps are current and easy to obtain

- a. Continue to provide brochures and rack cards to advertise events.
- b. Provide welcome packets to new Westminster residents, which could include maps, a business directory, and other information
- c. Ensure that the City's web page is updated frequently with events and other pertinent information

Objective 2: Ensure easy access to a traveler's destination, including vehicular and pedestrian access and the availability of parking and transit

- a. Provide good signage to attractions, events, and parking
- b. Assign additional police officers, as necessary, to monitor traffic control and safety during special events
- c. Provide shuttles to remote parking areas when necessary
- d. Support the development of alternative transit modes in the downtown area

Objective 3: Partner with local businesses to provide a welcoming environment to visitors

- a. Create an educational program for retail and service employees to increase awareness of the importance of providing positive interactions and quality services to visitors
- b. Provide information regarding upcoming events or projects to local businesses, so that business managers can plan accordingly to welcome visitors

Objective 4: Continue to explore opportunities for increasing the advertisement and availability of tourist information

- a. Maintain the section of the City of Westminster’s website that announces attractions and upcoming events
- b. Update the information kiosks downtown and explore new kiosk locations
- c. Support and encourage the development and publication of brochures and other materials necessary to effectively market Westminster

Goal C5: Promote the arts and culture community as an asset to the Westminster tourism industry and to the quality of life for residents

Objective 1: Cooperate with local representatives of the arts and culture community to provide opportunities for education and participation in arts and culture activities

- a. Educate the public on the benefits of arts and culture for individual growth, community identity, and local economic strength
- b. Partner with the Carroll Arts Council to develop and implement strategies to promote an arts and culture community
- c. Coordinate with McDaniel College and Carroll Community College art and theatre departments to incorporate their efforts into the community
- d. Initiate regular meetings with local artists and supporters of arts and culture activities to identify issues and opportunities
- e. Enhance and expand the “Art in the Park” event as a regional visual and performing arts festival

Objective 2: Consider public spaces and community facilities as opportunities for public participation and support in the arts and culture environment

- a. Use arts and culture to develop a “sense of place” in such features as gateways, community areas and City rights-of-way
- b. Involve local artists and urban designers in the design process for public spaces and community facilities
- c. Incorporate arts and culture in efforts to revitalize neighborhoods by providing artistic improvements to the neighborhood or art-related retail and employment opportunities
- d. Advocate for adequate community-based facilities to provide office, meeting, rehearsal, exhibition and performance spaces for the local arts and culture community

Objective 3: Integrate the arts and culture community into Westminster’s overall strategy for economic development and tourism

- a. Use the arts and cultural identity as a way to promote Westminster’s character and sense of place
- b. Develop opportunities for affordable live-work spaces for artists in Downtown Westminster to enhance Downtown’s economic vitality
- c. Educate local businesses on the role of the arts and culture community in the revitalization of Downtown Westminster
- d. Increase the involvement of the arts and culture community in the design and planning of new development and redevelopment projects
- e. Adopt strategies that support and strengthen the local arts and culture industry