

The Gettysburg Interpretive Plan

Overview: Entrusted to protect the sacred trust Gettysburg since 1863, this community struggles to preserve its historical integrity and resources in ways which enhance the town's economic stability and future. The quality of life of residents and the full experience of visitors must be balanced with the needs of a vital community facing serious challenges to its economy.

In late 1998, the Borough of Gettysburg, in partnership with Gettysburg National Military Park, initiated the Gettysburg Interpretive Plan project as part of the Gettysburg Historic Pathway Plan. Main Street Gettysburg was designated to lead this community in partnership building and interpretive plan development. For the first time known in Gettysburg, an historic Memorandum of Understanding united representatives from nine diverse, local organizations as well as two Commonwealth agencies.

This project examined two hundred years of local history, identified historic sites and resources, and created a master plan to interpret the town's history with the intent of deepening and extending the visitor experience. Seventeen individuals representing fifteen organizations and agencies served on the Steering Committee to ensure the goals, objectives and priorities reflect the community. These representatives persevered for two full years, culminating in the completion of the 80-page Gettysburg Interpretive Plan and its acceptance in November 2000 by Borough Council.

Both this comprehensive document, and the extraordinary community consensus and collaboration it represents, are recognized now as a vital foundation upon which to build and balance the interpretive history and economic future of Gettysburg. In April 2001, the Borough of Gettysburg received the Governor's Award for Local Government Excellence for the theme Building Community Partnerships to honor this community and the development process.

Need: Historic Gettysburg faces a modern crisis. Many challenges threaten the existence and future of Gettysburg's business districts, stability of its tax base, and ability to provide municipal services to the community and visitors. Ultimately, the town faces the deterioration or permanent loss of historic resources important to Gettysburg's unique character and to local, Commonwealth, and national history.

48% of property is tax exempt

Property tax rates are up to 75 times higher than surrounding townships

60% of residents are low income

58% of structures were built prior to 1940

Current highway infrastructure, such as US Route 30, converge through town

Taxpayers support increasing costs of hosting nearly 2 million visitors annually

Gettysburg National Military Park is relocating its Visitors Center

Urban flight, suburban sprawl, and retail expansion in surrounding townships accelerate the demise of town merchants and compete for visitor dollars

Precedent: In 1988, the Borough sponsored the development of the Gettysburg Historic Pathway Plan. This extensive, community-based planning initiative united local civic organizations, business associations, Gettysburg Borough, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg National Military Park, and Adams County and state agencies. Completed in 1990, the Gettysburg Historic Pathway Plan represented community consensus for the town's future. Goals of the Gettysburg Historic Pathway Plan are to:

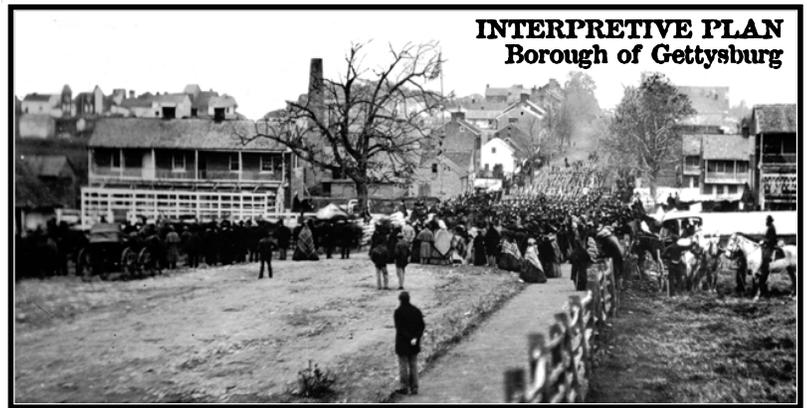
enhance and conserve the historic character of the town

stimulate economic development opportunities with visitation

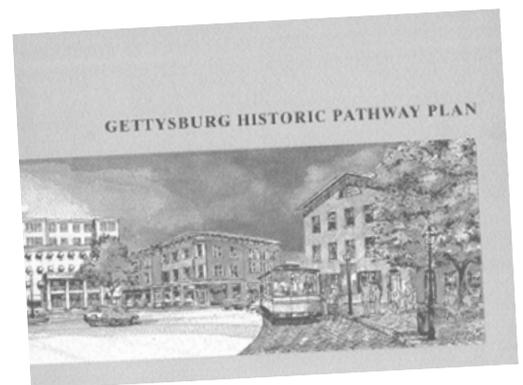
integrate and enhance the town's historically significant interpretation

improve the visitor experience in Gettysburg

In 1998 the Gettysburg Historic Pathway Plan was revisited with renewed attention upon key components of its third goal which designate the development of a compre-



On the morning of November 19, 1863, Lincoln left the David Wills House and traveled via horse down Baltimore Street in Gettysburg. Giving a short, two-minute speech at the dedication of the unfinished Soldiers' National Cemetery, the President changed how Americans viewed the American Civil War, and helped transform Gettysburg from a battleground into a national icon.



The Gettysburg Historic Pathway Plan, published in 1990, represents a community consensus "to guide community effort toward economic revitalization of our historic town, and to do so even as we honor and preserve our past."

hensive interpretive plan for Gettysburg, with the Wills House and Gettysburg Lincoln Railroad Station serving as major public orientation and interpretive anchors. The initial partnerships and community planning process of the Gettysburg Historic Pathway Plan were fundamental to the achievement and completion of the Gettysburg Interpretive Plan.

Participants: The Steering Committee includes the Gettysburg-Adams County Area Chamber of Commerce, Inc., Gettysburg Area Retail Merchants Association, Gettysburg College, the Gettysburg Convention and Visitors Bureau, Gettysburg National Military Park Advisory Commission, the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Main Street Gettysburg, Inc., the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the National Park Service. Also serving were representatives from the offices of Congressman Bill Goodling and Senator Rick Santorum as well as the Governor's Center for Local Government Services.

Purpose: The Plan will help those who visit Gettysburg to appreciate its history by telling the story of its people, of their lives during the Civil War, and of their role in the Battle's aftermath and commemoration. In doing so, the plan will help preserve the Borough's historic buildings and sites and bolster the economic health of the town. Some 1.7 million people visit Gettysburg National Military Park each year, and most pass through the Borough of Gettysburg as part of their Battlefield tour. Few, however, stop to appreciate the town's history and special qualities.

Goals & Objectives: After holding a series of public meetings and receiving comments, the Steering Committee developed a set of four goals and eight objectives for the Gettysburg Interpretive Plan, developed to guide the community as it looked at ways for interpreting and preserving its significant buildings and sites.

Goals -

1. *Interpret and Educate* - Provide quality interpretation and education for visitors and residents to foster a better understanding of the role of the town in the Battle of Gettysburg, its aftermath and commemoration. Make a visit to the Borough's historic buildings, sites, and interpretive programs a part of the core experience at Gettysburg National Military Park.
2. *Preserve Resources* - Identify the historic buildings and sites that are important to telling Gettysburg's story, and provide the economic means to assure their maintenance and preservation.
3. *Provide Economic Benefits to Borough Residents* - Work to insure that the residents of the Borough benefit economically from the increased visitation anticipated through the enhanced interpretation, preservation and marketing of the town's historic resources.
4. *Maintain Quality of Life* - Pay special attention to how new projects and programs designed to increase visitation will affect the day-to-day quality of life of the Borough's residents so that the town remains a vibrant place to live and work-not a large outdoor living history museum.

Objectives -

1. *Create interpretive programs with broad public appeal*
2. *Develop clear interpretive themes*
3. *Present a Wills House/Train Station plan*
4. *Provide for adequate visitor services*
5. *Promote and market Gettysburg*
6. *Preserve the neighborhood character*
7. *Identify and enhance programs*
8. *Develop supportive partnerships*

Keys to Success - Phases & Partnership: The strengthening of Main Street Gettysburg through key partner participation and the completion of the first phase of the Plan are key to its success. The projects in the Plan occur in two phases over a seven year period. Each phase has a strategic focus. The first phase provides the basic infrastructure, transportation and interpretive resources necessary to encourage and manage additional visitation and the second phase provides for additional community interpretive sites, additional parking and actions to preserve the town's resources.

The Board of Directors of Main Street Gettysburg will be revised to include key partners such as the Borough of Gettysburg, National Park Service at Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg-Adams County Chamber of Commerce, Gettysburg Convention & Visitors Bureau and Gettysburg Area Retail Merchants Association. Additional partners may include representatives from local business alliances, foundations, Adams County and its economic development agency, local businesses and the Main Street Gettysburg membership. The partner relationship of this Board of Directors will be confirmed with a new Memorandum of Understanding and reflected in revised bylaws of the organization. Many of these organizations are mobilized towards the successful implementation of the Gettysburg Interpretive Plan.

For Information:



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