



Annual Report

ANNUAL REPORT

History and Mission

The Wethersfield Tourism Commission was created by ordinance in March of 1999, as an outgrowth of the Wethersfield Festival. The success of the Festival demonstrated the potential for development of Historic Wethersfield as a tourist destination. The adopted mission of the Commission is “To promote and encourage tourism to make visitors to the New England area aware of Wethersfield’s heritage and it’s historic and scenic sites, to coordinate a year round calendar of events and promotions, and to assist in the marketing of any product promoting Wethersfield.”

Programs

In support of this mission the Commission has established a number of ongoing programs:

- The maintenance of a tourism specific website/internet presence to promote the Historic Wethersfield brand www.historicwethersfield.org
- Design and distribution of a high quality color brochure to promote the sites and attractions found in Wethersfield.
- A marketing and media campaign to promote the brand through press releases, newspaper, magazine and television promotions.
- Maintenance of a year round calendar of events on the website.
- Visitor inquiry information packets for distribution to interested potential visitors.
- Partnerships and coordination with State, Regional and local tourism stakeholders.
- Support of special events and projects designed to improve the visitor experience.

Benefits

Visiting historic and cultural sites continues to be one of the most popular tourist activities. Heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing niche market segments in the travel industry today. People who engage in historic and cultural activities spend more, do more, and stay longer than other types of U.S. travelers.

The continued development of tourism in Wethersfield will bring more visitors with money to spend in business located along the Silas Deane Highway and Berlin Turnpike as well as in Old Wethersfield. Increased tourism will not only support our local historic sites and museums and increase business, but it will help to reduce future increases in the heavy tax burdens that fall upon our businesses and residential property owners.

Membership

The Award Winning Commission consists of the following volunteers:

Shireen Aforismo -	Chamber of Commerce
Geraldine Munroe -	Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism
Dorcas McHugh -	Economic Development & Improvement Commission
Charles Ford -	Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers Association
Charles Forsdick -	Resident at Large
Chris Traczyk -	Silas Deane Highway Business Community
Katie Sullivan -	Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum
Elaine St. Onge -	Wethersfield Historical Society
Vacancy -	Berlin Turnpike Business Community
Carol Hall -	Alternate
Jenna Delay -	Alternate
Jeff Kotkin -	Council Liaison
Paul Montinieri, Jr. -	Past Council Liaison

The Commission receives staff support from Peter Gillespie, Director of Planning and Economic Development.

The Commission continued many of its ongoing programs and activities. Specifically, the Commission reported on the following accomplishments:

Website

- Our webmaster completed a series of improvements to the website which included a message from the mayor, an expanded calendar of events, links with related sites, the addition of the color brochure as PDF file and improvements to the site navigation which makes the site easier to use. 375th Anniversary events were highlighted throughout the year.
- The website continues to be a primary resource for prospective visitors to the town. The average monthly number of site visits has increased to 2,500 and the annual total of site visits has topped 30,000, this is an increase of 12% when compared to the previous year.

Brochures

- The Historic Wethersfield brochure was updated and redesigned.
- We continued our relationship with CTM Media Group to assist with the distribution of 20-25,000 of our brochure at Hotels and Visitor locations along the Interstate 91 and 95 corridors throughout the State.

Media

- Expanded media coverage provided story placements in Yankee Magazine (500,000), Journeys Magazine and This Old House Magazine (950,000), and news segments in CrossRoads Magazine, WTIC-TV, & WFSB-TV.
- Advertisements were placed in What To Do In Connecticut Travel Guide (240,000 circulation), AAA Journeys Magazine (685,000 circulation) and the Greater Hartford Guest Guide (1,000,000).

Visitor Promotions

- We created an off-the-shelf Special Promotion Discount Package published on Massachusetts & Connecticut "Staycations" websites and in the NY Times travel section.
- Our upgraded Promo Packet was mailed to 150 tour bus operators.
- 280 information requests were responded to from the Journeys advertisement.
- 160 information requests were responded to from website inquiries.
- Through a grant from the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism initiated a highway billboard advertising campaign that generated 14,295,000 impressions.
- Attractions listing in Greater Hartford Visitors Guide (500,000 circulation)
- Tourism produces a quarterly newsletter which is distributed in the Wethersfield school system.
- A Facebook page was created for Tourism.

Special Projects

- The Tourism Commission collaborated with the steering committee to begin implementation of the Master Plan for Historic Wethersfield enabled by our well earned Preserve America Grant.
- Wayfinding signage moved forward with the receipt of an additional Preserve America Grant; the committee completed an RFP for a design engineer consultant to complete final designs and draft bid documents enabling the town to select a manufacturing company with installation planned for 2010.
- Active participation on the Town's 375th Anniversary Committee.
- Continued membership with the Greater Hartford Convention and Visitors Bureau and networking event at Silas Robbins House.
- Continuing relationship with the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism resulting in 3 grant awards totaling \$40,000.
- Participation in Memorial Day Parade.
- Supported the Holiday Horse and Carriage rides in Old Wethersfield with cross promotion with Shopkeepers and Webb Deane Stevens Museum events.

- Farmers Market –a collaboration of Economic Development Improvement Commission & Tourism resulted in the establishment of Wethersfield first Farmers Market. The market runs from June through October every Thursday.
- Tourism Commission completed an application to be included on the Preservation Directories list of Best Place to Buy. Placement on the list brought Wethersfield to the attention of This Old House resulting in our Best Neighborhood Award.
- Began filming for Tourism DVD –completion dependent upon state budget

Benchmarks

- Our combined promotional efforts generated over 19,000,000 impressions for potential visitors.

Outlook For 2010/2011

- Completion of collaborative strategic marketing plan with WDS and WHS.
- Increased funding to support continued and expanded advertising.
- Implementation of new marketing effort (magazine insert) this Spring and Fall in cooperation with the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism and Madden Media.
- The development of an electronic database for distribution of newsletters and e-mail blasts to potential visitors.

We appreciate your continued support of your Award Winning Tourism Commission and its efforts to promote tourism and generate economic development