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An Assessment of Regional Partnerships for Economic Development through the National Heritage Area Collaborative Model

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AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA COLLABORATIVE MODEL

A Thesis Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA COLLABORATIVE MODEL

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The National Heritage Area program administered by the National Park Service represents a collaborative partnership approach to managing large-scale natural and living landscapes. Heritage area management objectives integrate goals across disciplines including resource conservation, historic preservation, community revitalization and economic development. With the growing number of National Heritage Area designations over the past decade, increasing focus has turned towards efforts to measure program effectiveness and resulting economic impacts as a return on federal investment. Previous studies established a working program evaluation model that places emphasis on the importance of the partnership system in heritage area implementation and outcomes. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute further to the understanding of the heritage area collaborative model as well as the intersection of the heritage area agenda with regional economic development strategies through an assessment of the partnerships that form between heritage areas and the economic development community.

The findings are based on primary and secondary data collection across four heritage areas through interviews with partnering organizations. Results from the
qualitative analysis indicated that the large majority of interviewees considered the heritage area a strong regional partner, confirming findings from previous studies. While this research suggests opportunities for improved heritage area engagement with this interest group, findings also indicate that there is a clear role for partnerships among heritage areas and economic development and private sector organizations in mobilizing resources to achieve economic development goals.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

The National Heritage Area (NHA) program evolved at the intersection of efforts to coordinate cultural, natural and historic landscape preservation at the regional scale as well as a shift of federal land conservation programs towards a more collaborative partnership approach to managing protected areas as opposed to the traditional national park structure. Heritage areas vary greatly in scale, natural features, and level of urban development within their defined regions, but generally tend to develop as a programmatic response to a perceived threat to a regional landscape that historically played a distinct role in a nationally significant “story.” These regional challenges and sources of heritage area formation often relate to the decline of a base industry or a period of uncertain economic transition. Recognizing that typical modern patterns of economic activity may permanently alter the unique natural and built environment (Means 1999), the challenge for these heritage area management entities and regional stakeholders is to strike a balance between preservation of the traditional landscape and promotion of place-based economic development that builds on a region’s existing historic, cultural and natural assets.

One of the first National Heritage Areas (“heritage areas”) to receive federal designation is the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, which has conserved the historic canal network that transported coal from the mines of Pennsylvania to markets in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Though historic interpretation and preservation of this regional asset play a significant role in heritage development,
economic development and community revitalization are a large focus of heritage area efforts in order to promote the current and future livability of communities connected to the canal system (Copping and Martin 2005). The corridor now contains and promotes a connected portfolio of historic and cultural sites, protected areas, as well as various recreational amenities (Copping et al. 2006) that both contribute to the regional “quality of life” and provide opportunities for new and existing businesses to capitalize on growing tourism and recreational markets.

The heritage area program is administered by the National Park Service (NPS), though heritage area activities are typically coordinated at the regional and local level by a designated management entity with NPS staff playing a limited advisory role (Martin-Williams and Selin 2006). The federally designated heritage area management entity serves as a facilitator of programs and partnerships, engaging state and local public agencies, non-profits, private landowners and the private sector (Selin et al. 2004) to coordinate heritage preservation and community revitalization efforts under a common mission and regional identity. Typical management objectives of heritage areas as summarized by NPS include: building sustainable partnerships to increase local stewardship capacity of resources; conserving natural, historic and cultural resources; providing interpretive and educational programming around stories of national significance; and fostering place-based community and economic development (Laven et al. 2010). Despite the significant variation amongst the 49 designated National Heritage Areas, common themes are that much of the work is entrepreneurial in nature, multidisciplinary, and requires significant volunteer involvement and local leadership (Copping and Martin 2005). Broad examples of strategies aimed at promoting economic
development include administering programs and engaging regional partners in promoting heritage and recreational tourism, enhancing “quality of life” to attract businesses, or facilitating the adaptive reuse of historic properties for productive economic use.

**Purpose for Research and Contribution to Field**

To achieve the goals laid out in their management plans, heritage areas rely on collaborative partnerships spanning various public and private interest groups and scales of government. These partnerships also contribute to the continuity and financial sustainability of the heritage area mission in fostering ongoing regional cooperation between various stakeholder groups and leveraging diverse funding sources to match the limited federal funding received. These partners include historic preservationists, resource conservationists, community-based organizations, economic development professionals and private sector stakeholders amongst others – interests groups from various disciplines that may not have traditionally found overlap in mission and goals or common ground for collective action.

With growing interest in the heritage area program and a proliferation of heritage area designations in the past decade, pressure from lawmakers to develop a program evaluation model has increased. In response to this pressure, heritage area managers and partners and the academic community have been collaborating to develop a heritage development research agenda with goals of more accurately measuring the efficiency, effectiveness, impacts and outcomes of heritage area activities (Copping and Martin 2005). An example are the recent “Sustainability Studies” conducted by the Conservation Studies Institute, a research arm of NPS focused on collaborative
conservation, that examined the partnership systems of three long-established heritage areas from the views of their various partners as part of a larger comprehensive program evaluation. Results from partner interviews revealed that the main perceived strengths were: the shared heritage or “story” that connects people to place; the collaborative framework the heritage area facilitates as the connector of multiple interest groups; the anchoring connections to the federal government that lends credibility and branding to heritage area programs; and the building of a partner network (Copping et al. 2006). These results gave important insights into questions of why partners choose to participate in the heritage area and the dynamic roles the management entity and partner organizations play in the heritage area activities. Study findings emphasized the critical role of the partnership system and indicated that a heritage area evaluation model should integrate theories of network governance to properly determine and communicate program impacts (Laven et al. 2010). Research and practice demonstrate an interest in heritage tourism as an economic development strategy (Brink 1998), and the number of voluntary regional partnerships for economic development across the U.S. is growing (Olberding 2002). These previous studies point to the importance of regional partnerships, but also suggest the need for more research on collaborative roles, as certain interest groups may play more active roles in heritage area activities than others.

This research seeks to qualitatively analyze national heritage area partnerships with the economic development community and private sector stakeholders across four different heritage areas of similar scale and geographies, focusing on the effectiveness of partner engagement and their evolution over time. This study focuses on the types of partnerships, motivations for partnering, expectations for participation and results,
partnership resiliency in response to economic or political change, and how heritage area participation may impact these partners in their composition, attitudes towards regionalism or programming focus.

Outcomes will help determine to what extent the heritage area program model facilitates regional collaboration amongst the economic development community and private sector to achieve economic development goals and engages these stakeholders in multidisciplinary heritage development activities. Study results will provide for further understanding of national heritage area program model and the less quantifiable economic impacts realized through providing a programmatic framework for regional cooperation and maximizing of scarce resources through collaborative efforts.

**Research Questions**

The overarching research question is: how effectively do heritage areas engage the economic development community and private sector in collaborative partnerships as a regional strategy for economic development? Research sub-questions include:

- What types of partnerships do heritage areas form with the economic development community and private sector (economic development corporations, business associations, chambers of commerce, convention and visitor bureaus, public economic development agencies, businesses, etc.)?
- What is the motivation for partnership formation between National Heritage Areas and partners from the economic development community and private sector? What issues did partner organizations feel could be addressed by this type of partnership?
• What are the expectations for participation and results? To what extent are these partners from the economic development community or private sector “taking ownership” in the heritage area? What is the depth of commitment?

• How flexible is the partnership under different project contexts? How does the heritage area concept adapt across different partnerships and projects to achieve management plan goals?

• How do the partnerships evolve or broaden in scope over time?

• How are these partners impacted by heritage area participation? Do they change because of the partnership in composition, programming focus and/or attitudes towards regional cooperation?

• What are the barriers to building sustainable partnerships with the economic development community or private sector stakeholders? Are there opportunities for strengthening or improving the heritage area partnerships with the economic development community or private sector stakeholders?

**Goals and Objectives**

The main goals for this research are to analyze the effectiveness of heritage area engagement with partners from the economic development community or private sector and to identify potential characteristics of successful partnership or barriers to sustaining collaborative partnerships within the heritage area program framework. Objectives for this research include:

1. To qualitatively analyze the motivating factors, expectations for participation and results, flexibility of the partnership and partnership roles, evolution of the partnership over time and the types of impacts that heritage area participation has
on these partners from the economic development community or private sector (for example: increased capacity of organization, changed attitudes towards regional collaboration, increased commitment to heritage area goals, etc.).

2. To identify potential characteristics of successes in or barriers to engaging and building sustainable partnerships with the economic development community or private sector stakeholders.

3. To make recommendations for National Heritage Area staff and NPS officials in improving collaboration with the economic development community and private sector stakeholders and in communicating achievements in building sustainable partnership networks to funding organizations and legislators.

**Thesis Chapter Outline**

The study is organized as follows. The first chapter provides a brief background on the missions and goals of the National Heritage Area program as it relates to economic development and introduces the research questions, goals and outcomes.

Chapter two proceeds to review scholarly literature on public-private partnerships, theories of governing by network and previous evaluations of individual heritage area partnership systems. The third chapter outlines the methodology used for this research including heritage area case studies selection, data collection, and interview questions used to achieve research goals.

Chapter four describes the types of programming heritage areas and their partners implement to support economic development goals in their respective regions. Chapter five gives background on the four National Heritage Areas selected for case studies.
including their scale, geographies, national historical significance, mission and goals and programming focus.

The sixth chapter presents the research findings of heritage area partner interviews and emerging common themes. This study concludes with chapter seven in which key points are reviewed, future areas of research are suggested and recommendations are made to assist in building and sustaining collaborative heritage area partnerships with the economic development community and private sector stakeholders.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the scholarly literature and findings from previous assessments of the National Heritage Area program which are used to inform the methodology of this research. The chapter begins with a review of trends in coordinating and funding the delivery of public goods and services through public-private partnerships, historical shifts in municipal economic development strategies and evolving forms of regional governance within the recent US political and economic framework. The goal of this literature review is to gain an understanding of both the evolution of the National Heritage Area program as a regional landscape management and heritage development strategy and also how regional economic development literature and underlying theories on social partnerships and network governance relate to the dynamic partnership systems that emerge from heritage area participation.

Public Private Partnerships in Planning

Place building activities and the provision of public goods and service have trended increasingly toward utilizing forms of public-private partnerships. This is in response to both a significant decrease in federal support for municipal development programs starting in the early to mid-1980s (Clarke and Gaile 1992) and a recognition that public action and spending by fiscally strapped local governments alone will not suffice in solving and planning for problems of urban development. Public-private partnerships are a means to involve the various sectors of society with a stake in the success of a community, city or region to achieve common goals or provide public goods and services (Chollar 1979). In viewing community development initiatives as an
investment with measurable returns for all parties, the pool of potential resources widens, including public and private actions, physical and natural resources and also public and private funds (Chollar 1979). The investment, risk, responsibility and benefits are shared to some capacity between public and private interests in such an arrangement (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002).

By nature, the public and private sectors bring complementary power to the partnership. The public sector offers the legitimacy of elected government, dedicated funding, and the ability to streamline the regulatory process, though its actions are often subject to public scrutiny and are limited geographically to political jurisdictions. In contrast, the private sector provides more freedom in geographic scope and range of projects as well as a larger capacity to accept risk. There is also less restriction of accountability or public involvement in project implementation, though the private sector relies only on persuasion and lacks the legal power to force compliance upon a community and push plans forward (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002). Cooperation through voluntary partnerships provides benefits by pooling these available resources, combining complementary strengths to expand capacity or by reinforcing the mission of the partnership and strengthening the legitimacy of the cause.

There is a great range in forms of collaboration that are referred to as “public-private partnerships” and scholarly literature has sought to both outline a typology and relate the different forms to function and results. Two of the four types of partnerships as outlined by Schaeffer and Loveridge (2002) are most relevant to the National Heritage Area partnership networks to be discussed in further detail in later sections: the joint venture and the open-ended partnership. Joint ventures are generally dedicated to a
specific project or purpose and the commitment of human and financial resources from each party are pre-determined. Each party remains independent in nature throughout the partnership and the partnership generally does not continue beyond the completion of the project or resolution of the issue (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002).

Open-ended public-private partnerships, on the other hand, are defined by a central purpose, but the goals, projects and commitments are adaptable to new developments and opportunities for collaboration. All partners participate in decision-making and share in the risks and rewards. Schaeffer and Loveridge (2002) note that these actual “partnerships” are relatively rare because long-term, open-ended cooperation requires significantly more structure and resource commitment than does cooperation around short-term projects. Most often, the public-private cooperation forms around a pressing issue or specific project in a type of joint venture, leaving many available resources underutilized. Though sustained collaborative efforts towards long-term planning goals aren’t currently the norm, federal and state governments have implemented policies and programs that attempt to engage public and private stakeholders in this type of longer-term collaboration with varying levels of success. The National Heritage Areas program is an example of such a federal action, dedicating a management entity and providing limited operational funding to foster on-going collaboration under a common vision at the regional scale.

**Regional Partnerships for Economic Development**

Though public private partnerships are occurring more frequently across all scales and sectors of government services, the most common intersection of business and society occurs in economic development efforts (Chollar 1979). Regional partnerships
for economic development are generally defined as voluntary alliances between local governments, private sector firms and nonprofit organizations that have formed with the goals of enhancing the regional economy across multiple jurisdictions. Previous studies have found that the number of these types of regional public-private partnerships increased fourfold from the 1970s to the 1990s across U.S. metropolitan areas (Olberding 2002). It is theorized that the proliferation of regional public-private partnerships for economic development has resulted from the convergence of recent trends in both the practice of economic development and in forms of regional governance. Case studies of these voluntary groups often comprised of public, private and nonprofit interests suggest that need may be a key motivating factor driving their formation – perhaps due to loss of a traditional regional economic base or instances of high unemployment or out-migration of youth (Olberding 2002).

The practice of economic development has evolved significantly throughout the recent history of the United States depending on underlying development theories, resources available through state and federal programs and also the context of the global economy. The first wave of economic development strategies can be traced to the 1930s and post-Great Depression era and were characterized by business attraction policies designed to lower the costs of doing business within a particular jurisdiction such as tax incentives and industrial revenue bonds. A shift occurred during the 1970s to a second wave of economic development policies geared more towards endogenous economic growth as American manufacturing declined and global competition increased (Clarke and Gaile 1992). These strategies turned the focus of economic development practitioners inward and targeted entrepreneurial and small business development within
a jurisdiction or region, helping them to connect to venture capital and expand to new markets for their goods and services. The third wave marked a shift towards economic development strategies that facilitate partnerships and develop a resilient network of public and private actors that are able to mobilize existing scarce resources and programs. This marked a departure from the expensive public investments of previous strategies and policies (Olberding 2002).

An evolution of regional governance systems in the U.S. can also be traced to three phases, starting with an attempt at top-down restructuring of local governments and institutional regional strategies during the progressive movement of the early 20th century. A shift then occurred in the 1960s and 1970s towards encouraging regional planning through conditions tied to federal funding. Programs would require or give preferences to a regional plan or the alignment of local plans with regional goals as a condition for funding eligibility. In the early 1990s, the somewhat weak tradition of regional governance then saw an emergence of voluntary, regional partnerships coordinated by public, private and nonprofit interests – placing emphasis on the development of capacity through inter-organizational cooperation towards shared regional planning goals (Olberding 2002).

Also documented in new forms of regionalism is the conceptual framework of the New Economy, which assumes that advances in technology and new forms of economic competition have created a new regional dimension to the development process. This model also states that business enterprises, in addition to previously discussed trends in governance, are restructuring to be less dependent on specific products while becoming
more dependent on “regional clusters” and relations with other firms and external economies of scale and scope (Cooper 1993).

Noted in literature on regional partnerships for economic development is the difficulty of sustaining cooperation among a large number of groups and interests without a central authority or coordinating entity to comply action – the “dilemma of collective action.” Olberding also points out that the solution to this dilemma is “cooperative norms” or the extent to which parties usually act or are expected to act in a collaborative manner. The presence of a designated partnership managing entity or facilitator may also be considered a solution to this dilemma of collective action in sustaining collaborative partnerships (2002).

Heritage-Based Economic Development as a Sustainable Development Strategy

With the effects of globalization and the decline of certain traditional industries such as manufacturing and agriculture across many U.S. communities taking hold, another recent trend gathering speed has been a focus on asset-based development strategies aimed at strengthening and diversifying a community or region’s economic base. This often involves a community-based inventory and assessment of the natural and built assets that contribute to the historic character of the landscape (WVU Division of Forestry 2005). The idea is for these communities to protect and build upon these existing amenities that contribute to the unique sense of place to develop tourism strategies and market the local quality of life to potential residents and businesses (Brink 1998). Heritage tourism is also viewed as a sustainable economic development strategy that brings outside dollars into the region, while also preserving the unique landscape and
making efforts to avoid the sprawling development patterns that often accompany modern economic growth (Means 1999).

Heritage strategies generally do not include tourist attractions or experiences representing a commoditization of history or created heritage – e.g. Disney Corp.’s recent attempt to create a Civil War-themed park in Manassas, VA– but more focus on the principle of authenticity and quality (Brink 1998). The remaining four principles for heritage tourism as identified by field experience undertaken by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Endowment for the arts include preserving and protecting resources, making sites come alive, finding the fit between a community and tourism, and enhanced collaboration (Brink 1998).

In addition to the value placed on these special landscapes by those who live there, there has been increasing recognition by federal and state officials that preservation of these historic sites and place-based historic character is essential for the long-term success of a community or region (Brink 1998), particularly those experiencing economic transition, e.g. the loss or decline of a base industry. The National Heritage Area movement is an example of this recognition, but it is also evidenced by programs such as Preserve America, which is administered by various federal departments with the goals of supporting community efforts to promote increased local participation in preserving cultural and natural heritage assets and strengthen regional identities (Preserve America Program 2011). Another example is the Main Street program, administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and often working in conjunction with National Heritage Areas and state governments. Main Street, which is currently utilized by over 1,300 communities nationwide, is aimed at strengthening and revitalizing the downtowns
commercial districts of historic communities (Brink 1998). Though matched by contributions from downtown business owners, public funding and technical assistance provided by Main Street programs support functions that private management would provide in a mall. Main Street is, in a sense, a collective response through public-private partnership to the issue of fragmented parcel ownership in historic downtown areas (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002).

The challenge for these communities is to balance economic development with growth that is appropriate for these historic, cultural and natural landscapes. Common strategies specifically related to economic development in addition to promoting heritage tourism would be facilitating adaptive reuse of historic buildings for commercial or residential uses or development of recreational amenities such as trails that connect natural amenities, historic sites and commercial districts (Means 1999).

Successes of heritage tourism strategies are generally documented as the rehabilitation and ongoing preservation of historic buildings and sites, strengthened community pride and sense of place as well as more visitors experiencing a unique piece of US heritage (Brink 1998). In addition, numerous economic impact studies have tried to measure and convey the impacts of local and regional heritage tourism systems on regional economies. These studies generally attempt to capture the direct, indirect and induced impacts of tourism expenditures within a defined region and are typically based on an input-output model of the regional economy (Strauss 2001). Examples include a study on the economic impact tourism within a nine-county region of Pennsylvania using an impact analysis for planning (IMPLAN) model, describing “tourism” on the basis of twenty-six tourism activities. The results established the direct sales impact of non-local
visitors at $191 million and indirect and induced impacts at $369 million, further deriving $190 million as having been directed towards wages and salaries in support of 14,000 annual jobs in 1995 (Strauss et al. 1996).

Similar impact studies have also been done for specific heritage areas using a Money Generated Model (MGM) analysis. A study on the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor estimates $144.5 million in direct effects and $236.1 million in indirect effects of visitation in sales alone. The extent to which Corridor efforts can be attributed to these impacts is not firmly established, though the results clearly show the significant impacts tourism has on the region’s economy (Copping et al. 2006). These types of tangible results are what have garnered increasing recognition from public officials as well as the business and economic development communities along with the recognition that heritage development is a viable option for economic growth.

There are also less quantifiable economic impacts of heritage-tourism strategies and preservation of the unique characteristics of communities and regions to take into account when considering the community benefits. These can include enhanced quality of life and increased recreational and cultural “lifestyle” amenities that attract businesses and residents to certain areas. Low tax rates were once thought of as the critical local economic development tool and considered sufficient in attracting businesses and industrial firms. Today the availability of these types of lifestyle amenities are greatly emphasized by most firms when considering employee relocation along with other factors such as quality of the school system or proximity to airports (Kotval and Mullin 2007). An example of the importance companies place on these amenities is the decision of Cisco Industries Systems to locate in the town of Boxboro, Massachusetts over other
nearby towns that had offered significantly better financial incentives. Cisco ultimately chose Boxboro based on the quality-of-life factors the small town offered (Kotval and Mullin 2007).

Benefits can also include increasing tendencies for stakeholders to cooperate regionally, or development of “cooperative norms” (Olberding 2002), as well as development of local leadership capacity and social capital through these place-based strategies that span various public and private interests. Setting a precedent of regional collaboration between local governments and regional bodies, non-profit organizations, and private sector stakeholders serves to strengthen opportunities for future regional partnerships for economic development on a scale that allows for greater access to state and federal funding sources. These less tangible benefits that contribute to economic vitality are typically conveyed anecdotally and can often be a challenge to communicate to some community leaders and public officials at the local, state and federal level that may focus exclusively on traditional measures of economic benefit including jobs created or expansion of the local tax base.

**National Heritage Areas as an Approach to Regional Planning**

Recognizing that the cultural forces and shared histories that can define a region do not generally operate within strictly delineated municipal borders, the more logical scale for heritage planning to take place is often a multi-jurisdictional regional level. Another factor when considering the advantages of a regional approach is that small rural communities often have many local natural and cultural resources to support heritage tourism, but they often have limited resources in staff and funding to develop the necessary tourism infrastructure and effectively market themselves as tourism...
destinations working in isolation (WVU Division of Forestry 2005). To address this need and to serve national interests in protecting significant heritage landscapes, a more recent regional manifestation of the heritage-based economic development strategies is embodied in the National Heritage Area program administered in conjunction with the National Park Service. The NHA movement began with the first federal designation in 1984 of the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor and has expanded to include a current total of 49 federally designated heritage areas across the U.S (Figure 2.1). These areas, or “regions,” generally encompass identifiable and diverse natural, historic and cultural landscapes with resources and assets of national significance to part of the American “story” (Hamin 2001). They also vary greatly in size and shape from the thirty-plus county Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area in eastern Iowa to the linear Augusta Canal National Heritage Area in Georgia following a the 13.5 mi canal through two counties (Means 1999).

Figure 2.1. Map of Current National Heritage Areas (Source: Alliance of NHAs)
The National Heritage Area localized management structure and the more general concept of a “partnership park” emerged from the dynamic definition of what constitutes a national park and the expansion of the National Park Service’s (NPS) scope from natural areas to historic landmarks and ultimately to include cultural landscapes and places that offer recreational opportunities as well (Barrett 2003). This also marks a considerable shift from federal land use controls and fee-ownership in protected areas to a more cooperative approach to preserving larger landscapes and living, working communities (Means 1999).

While technically affiliated with the NPS, through which limited federal funding flows, management of these areas tends to function through partnerships and regional collaboration between landowners, local governments, state and federal agencies, as well as the private sector. The role the NPS plays in the heritage area partnerships varies, but most often NPS managers provide technical assistance and approval of the management plan with the heritage area management entity engaging in strategic planning, facilitating the partnership network and administrating heritage area programs (Barrett 2003).

In terms of programming and partnership focus, most heritage areas blend education, revitalization, growth management, cultural conservation and recreation (Means 1999) to achieve management plan goals of economic development as well as preservation of important resources and unique community character (Hamin 2001). Critical to achieving goals of the management plan is the formation and cultivation of long-term partnerships across various interest groups from the local, regional, state and federal level in order to carrying out programming, leverage diverse funding sources and
provide a collaborative framework for coordination between entities that typically would not have communicated without the regional vision of a heritage area.

**Social Partnerships and Advantages to Network Governance**

Suzanne Waddock has developed a model of the evolutionary process of developing social partnerships that can be applied to the process of partnership formation and ongoing activities and interactions between the heritage area management entity and the network of heritage area partners. Based on a study of five social partnerships and a review of existing case studies, Waddock identifies the evolutionary stages of social partnerships as: 1) a context of forces generating recognition of the need for and use of partnership, 2) initiation of the partnership, 3) establishment, and 4) maturity (Waddock 1989). There are a number of different sources of pressure or incentive to interact that causes these social partnerships to form despite a lack of structured hierarchies. Two of these sources apply specifically to the heritage area mission: one is a common vision or a common understanding that exists in a community or region about an issue and the framework in which it should be addressed, and another is visionary leadership – or a “champion” of the partnership idea – which is a role the management entity fulfills as a facilitator of partnership networks and regional cooperation (Waddock 1989).

The study also suggests that three issue characteristics are necessary for partnerships to be an appropriate and effective solution: a sense of interdependence, the perception that there are benefits to be derived by each of the partners and issue importance or salience to potential partners (Waddock 1989). These are characteristics that can shape motivations for partnership formation and expectations for participation and results as heritage areas engage potential partners.
Additional literature on effective network governance, defined by Gerlach as interorganizational coordination that is “characterized by organic or informal social systems, in contrast to bureaucratic structures within firms and formal contractual relationships between them (2002)” adds understanding to the NHA partnership system. Critical factors associated with effective network governance identified in previous studies useful for examining partnerships with the economic development community and private sector within the heritage area program framework include 1) reciprocity, 2) relationships, 3) learning, and 4) creativity/flexibility (Innes and Booher 2003). In addition to identifying elements present in effective partnerships, previous assessments have found advantages to the network governance approach in protected area management. The collaborative partnership approach has been found to increase civic engagement and local participation, which leads to enhanced management effectiveness (Laven et al. 2010).

**National Heritage Area Partnership Networks**

Evaluations of heritage area partnership networks have been conducted on individual heritage areas in recent years. The Conservation Study Institute (CSI) of Woodstock, VT was commissioned by the National Park Service to conduct sustainability studies investigating three primary aspects of heritage area efforts to date: the first being accomplishments and progress toward heritage area goals, and the leveraging of public investments; the second being the structure and operations of the current management framework; and the third aspect, which is most relevant to this research, is the partners’ perspectives on how the partnerships has worked (Copping et al. 2006). These comprehensive studies were conducted in conjunction with three well-established
heritage areas – the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Partnership in Pennsylvania and New Jersey; the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in Massachusetts and Rhode Island; and the Cane River National Heritage Area in Louisiana.

With the sustainability studies’ focus on understanding how the heritage area partnership system operates from partners’ perspectives, CSI sought to uncover how the heritage area programs, activities and investments may have an impact on partners as well as to discover opportunities for strengthening or improving the partnership system going forward (Copping et al. 2006). The partner interviews produced various emerging themes and sub-themes that characterized perceived strengths and challenges of the partnership system – covering the range of heritage area partners including local government officials, state and federal agencies, landowners, non-profit organizations as well as corporations and business owners. These results give greater insight into the qualitative impacts of the heritage area on overall partner capacity, support and trust in the management entity and heritage area mission. Themes that characterized perceived strengths of heritage area efforts and achievements included a shared heritage – linking people to place, a collaborative framework, anchoring connections with its affiliation with NPS, and building a partner network (Copping et al. 2006).

More specifically related to the theme of a collaborative framework, the study results indicate that the heritage area dynamic partnership system with the management entity serving as a “central hub” ultimately represents more than just an aggregate of the total number of partnerships (Laven et al. 2010). This must be taken into account when considering short and longer-term heritage area impacts and the adaptability in policy
response, program implementation and funding opportunities that a network governance approach enables. These types of complex dynamic systems, to which NHA partnership networks have been compared based on these previous sustainability study results, tend to “continuously explore possible response options to opportunities or challenges, and exhibit a constant interplay of top-down and bottom-up processes (Booher 2008).”

These evaluations do not, however, delve into the variation that may exist in motivations for partnership formation, expectations for participation and results, or the impacts the heritage area has on the different fields and interests partners represent – ranging from the historic preservation community to the resource conservation community to the economic development community, for example.

**Economic Development Community and Private Sector Partners**

When considering heritage area management entity’s engagement with the economic development community and private sector stakeholders, Means (1999) suggests that heritage areas are increasingly finding common ground and working as partners with industrial development agencies and chambers of commerce. She specifically notes that the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce proudly uses the heritage corridor as an example of its progressive regionalism, high quality of life and historic ties to the industrial revolution. Regional and local tourism leaders are naturally also active in heritage area development as they are recognized as an ideal collaborative venue for packaging and marketing regional natural, historical, cultural and recreational attractions to outside visitors (Means 1999).

The results of Olberding’s (2002) study on voluntary regional partnerships for economic development, a category under which heritage area partnerships with the
economic development community and private sector may fall, also suggests avenues for additional research in examining the involvement of public officials and business leaders in these partnerships and the degree to which the public-private mix influences their activities and performance (2002). A 1991 study of interorganizational relations in the tourism field used Waddock’s evolutionary model for social partnerships to examine the relations between the U.S. Forest Service, chambers of commerce, and tourism associations adjacent to an Arkansas National Forest. The results revealed a general lack of cooperative relations across these organizations under the existing environment, though stakeholders expressed interest in establishing a cooperative framework for future collaboration. The main predictors of cooperative relations that emerged from the interviews in this study, however, were domain consensus, a sense of interdependence among organizations, and geographic proximity (Selin and Beason).

As heritage areas increasingly engage the economic development community and private sector – including tourism bureaus, chambers of commerce, industrial development authorities, Main Street programs, etc. – in cooperative partnerships to achieve management goals and promote heritage-based economic development, an opportunity emerges to take a closer examination at the nature, formation and evolution of these partnerships within the framework of the National Heritage Area program. Findings from this research will allow for an assessment of the effectiveness of the heritage area collaborative model as a regional partnership for economic development in order to have a greater understanding of the program’s potential impacts on regional economic health.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Criteria for Heritage Area Selection

This research used a multiple case study design to qualitatively analyze the effectiveness of heritage area engagement with the economic development community and private sector. Effectiveness was gauged by exploring the motivations for partnership formation, expectations for participation and results, partnership resiliency and flexibility of partnership roles, and also how heritage area engagement potentially impacts the goals, attitudes or operations of these partners throughout the course of the partnership. This qualitative data was collected across partnerships from multiple heritage areas to create a large enough pool of interview respondents to ensure variation in effectiveness of partnership engagement and also to produce common themes that characterize strong voluntary partnerships. Data from interviews was also used to investigate factors that serve as potential barriers to sustaining collaborative partnerships and reveal opportunities for improving heritage area engagement with the economic development community and private sector stakeholders.

Four heritage areas were selected for this research. Heritage areas were also selected based on similarities including regional location (northeast US), regional form (a corridor in which communities and regional landscape physically connected to either a river or scenic byway), and also maturity (having received federal designation around a similar time) to control for structural variation these factors may produce in facilitating regional cooperation and engaging in collaborative partnerships with stakeholders. Additional considerations in heritage area selection was proximity to the researcher as it
may have been necessary to travel and meet with heritage area staff or partners to perform on-site interviews and also the number of heritage area partners from the economic development community that could be identified via public sources. Individual heritage area web sites were searched to identify characteristics that meet these criteria and then I undertook exploratory conversations with heritage area staff. The four heritage areas selected include:

- **The Journey Through Hallowed Ground**, a national heritage corridor and scenic byway that traverses historic landscapes across fifteen counties in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

- **Schuylkill River National Heritage Area**, a heritage area that follows the route of the Schuylkill River in southeastern Pennsylvania from its beginnings in Pennsylvania coal country to its confluence with the Delaware River in the city of Philadelphia.

- **The Lackawanna Heritage Valley**, a national heritage area that follows the Lackawanna River corridor through the city of Scranton and smaller post-industrial rural communities in northeastern Pennsylvania.

- **The Last Green Valley**, formerly known as the Quinneboag-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor, that encompasses 35-towns in pastoral southern-central Massachusetts and eastern Connecticut.

**Data Collection**

An examination of heritage area administrative documents, such as feasibility studies, management plans, annual reports, newsletters, promotional materials and other online sources accessed via individual heritage area web sites was performed across
various national heritage areas in order to assemble a comprehensive typology of the programming implemented by heritage area managing entities. I collected data on programs designed to strengthen and diversify the regional economy and support development compatible with the heritage landscape. These types of programming and specific projects are sometimes carried out independently by the heritage area management entity, but most often are carried out through collaborative partnerships with various state, regional and local stakeholders.

**National Heritage Area Partner Interviews**

While this research originally planned to conduct approximately 15 semi-structured telephone interviews with heritage area partners from the economic development community or private sector to collect the qualitative data used to analyze the heritage area partnerships from the partner’s perspective, only 10 interviews were ultimately conducted due to time and resource constraints. Key partners in implementation of the community and economic development aspects of the heritage area management plans identified for this research included economic development corporations, local and regional chambers of commerce, local business associations, municipal economic development offices, county departments of arts and culture, Main Street programs and businesses.

These partner organizations were identified through listings on heritage area websites and management plans. Contact information was collected through the public web sites of these individual partner organizations. In certain cases, the questions were emailed to interviewees and written responses were received electronically to accommodate the time and resource constraints of the research subjects.
As opinions may vary depending on the type of organization interviewed and the number of interviews that could be performed by the researcher are limited, first priority type of partners were economic development organizations, departments or planners as representative of the public sector and chambers of commerce as representative of the private sector. As the number of these types of partners was limited, additional interviews were performed with other types of organizations and businesses from the economic development community and private sector.

Interview questions were formulated by building upon previous heritage area partnership evaluations conducted as part of recent “Sustainability Studies” for the National Park Service by Laven et al. at the Conservation Study Institute of Woodstock, VT (2010). The interviews conducted for this research included additional questions that explored partnership motivations and expectations for partnership results more in-depth. Also included were questions more specifically oriented towards the economic development community and private sector. The interview protocol used in this study is included as Appendix B.

The qualitative data from the interviews were then analyzed and deconstructed to determine both common themes and variations in responses regarding perceived strengths and advantages to heritage area partnerships or barriers to successful heritage area engagement with partners from the economic development community and private sector. From these interview results, this research sought to identify the following aspects of the heritage area partnerships and compare results across the four heritage areas partnership systems. Based on results from previous studies, this research hypothesized indicators of strong social partnerships and effective heritage area engagement may include:
• Issues addressed by partnership are salient to partners
• Broad alignment of partner goals and expectations for results with heritage area vision
• Partnership resilience in the face of political and economic change
• Increased capacity of partner organizations
• A sense of interdependency

The research also sought to determine from interview results why certain partners were more effectively engaged than others and identify barriers to effectiveness of heritage area engagement and opportunities for improvement. Based on results from previous studies, this research hypothesized that barriers may include:

• Perceived competition between municipalities or businesses
• Individual organizations unwilling to “give up turf”
• Expectations for participation exceed capacity of partner staff and funds
• Bureaucratic procedures
• Heritage-based or tourism development set as low priority goal

**Definitions and Assumptions**

This research will use the following definitions:

• *Heritage* – The nationally significant “story” of the area and its significant associated assets (cultural, historical, natural, landscape, community, etc.)
• *Partner* – A “partner,” in this case, constitutes an organization, institution, agency, or individual who collaborates with the heritage area on specific initiatives that help implement the management plan through both formal and informal partnerships.
• **Economic development community and private sector “partners”** – These partners may include chambers of commerce, tourism bureaus, development authorities or agencies, Main Street programs, organizations promoting entrepreneurship, business owners, corporations, etc.

• **Regional economic development** –“Regional” implies a multi-jurisdictional areas; economic development refers to strategies employed by public, business and nongovernmental sector partners designed to build up the economic capacity of an area to improve its economic future and the quality of life for all (The World Bank 2011).

• **Collaborative partnership** – A collaborative partnership will be defined for this research as the voluntary pooling of resources (labor, money, information, etc.) between two or more parties to accomplish collaborative goals. (Selin and Chavez 1994)

This research does not aim to demonstrate that collaborative partnerships are desirable or that the heritage area collaborative partnership model is the best strategy for regional economic development. The research does assume, however, that various groups across a wide range of interests have chosen to voluntarily participate in these heritage area collaborative partnerships because they perceive certain advantages or positive impacts. This research also assumes that heritage tourism and heritage-based development strategies have been proven effective approaches to low-impact economic development based on previous research and economic impact analyses.
Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of this research include the timeframe of the master’s thesis as well as staff and resource constraints limiting the ability for partners to participate in phone interviews. The identification of partners from publicly available sources as opposed to working with heritage area staff to identify partners may have excluded relevant partners from the pool of potential interviewees that were for some reason not listed in heritage area reports or web sites. Because this research is primarily personal interview-based, there may also be limitations in objectivity of the interviewees if there are incentives to over- or understate the motivations for, expectations for or impacts of the partnerships.

Delimitations of this research undertaking include the use of heritage areas within reasonable proximity of the researcher for case studies because of limited travel resources. While it may be valuable to compare the heritage area collaborative partnership model to other types of voluntary partnerships for regional economic development, this research is limited to the heritage area framework as a basis for comparison across case studies because of the consistency in the heritage area program structure. Similarly, while linking the assessed strength of these collaborative partnerships to economic outcomes related to the program areas described in the following chapter would be very useful in conveying the potential economic impacts of the heritage area partnership model, the scope of research has been narrowed to a comparative analysis of the nature and evolution of the partnerships themselves due to time and resource constraints as well.
CHAPTER 4

HERITAGE AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

Though heritage area economic development efforts are most often associated with heritage tourism promotion, heritage area programming supports goals of economic development and community revitalization through a range of partnerships and program types. Quantifiable economic impacts attributed to heritage area activities and partnerships commonly include increased number of visitors and visitor spending in a region, but also can include increased number of jobs, business incomes and tax revenues. These programs range from initiatives that serve to enhance the local “quality of life,” a factor that contributes greatly to businesses attraction and retention, to programs that contribute more directly to economic development such as administering a regional revolving loan fund that supports new or expanding businesses related to heritage development. In order to provide context to the exploration of the partnerships that heritage areas form with the economic development community and private sector stakeholders, this chapter will outline the various types of programming implemented and facilitated by heritage area management entities across the nation. The following reflect findings from the review of programming types and examples of successful programs from individual heritage areas. It is important to note that specific programming varies across different heritage areas depending on a variety of factors including the heritage areas’ mission and goals, human and financial resources, technical knowledge of the staff as well as number and type of partners.
Tourism Marketing, Coordination and Branding

Heritage area activities typically include promotion of the region as a tourism destination as a regional economic development strategy, which is particularly emphasized in heritage areas that encompass largely rural landscapes in order to capitalize on scenic and recreational amenities. An important means in which heritage areas often contribute to tourism marketing is by providing the unifying “story” of the region’s nationally significant heritage and the related heritage “brand” and themes on which to connect a region’s various heritage attractions. These amenities can include battlefields, historic sites, Main Street communities, touring routes, regional trails and waterways or a National Park, amongst other amenities. The unifying themes, underscored by the federal designation and official affiliation with the National Park Service, can serve as the common basis on which managers of parks and historic sites, tourism organizations and businesses project their brand to visitors and coordinate their historic interpretation and marketing efforts. The Journey Through Hallowed Ground (JTHG), for example, promotes the byways that connect Gettysburg, PA to Monticello, VA across themes that span the many critical chapters of U.S. history that the historic sites represent. JTHG coordinates the interpretation of the region’s “story” around the three themes of “land of conflict, reunification and rebuilding,” “land of leadership,” and a “place of national beauty and rural character” as a means to connect the dots between the various regional attractions and enhance the visitor experience (Journey Through Hallowed Ground 2011).
Main Streets/Historic Downtown Revitalization

Local Main Streets programs administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation are common partners of heritage areas as the two programs share goals of historic preservation and community revitalization. Though the Main Street program typically operates at the local scale and is administered through a state coordinating office, National Heritage Areas can facilitate regional collaboration amongst programs that operate in communities with shared histories and connect these historic downtowns both physically via scenic byways, waterways or trails and also through programming and partnerships by hosting region-wide roundtables and workshops. A notable example is the “Corridor Market Towns” program administered by the Delaware and Lehigh Canal Heritage Corridor that was implemented in 2000 in conjunction with Pennsylvania Downtown Center as the state’s pilot regional community revitalization project. This partnership between local officials, heritage area staff and the state Downtown Center has coordinated and provided ongoing technical assistance in heritage development projects including streetscapes and trail improvements, restoration of historic buildings and façade improvements and also grant-writing assistance and technical training for staff (Proia 2005).

Recreational Trails

Trail-based economic development initiatives have also been garnering more attention from policymakers and the economic development community through both increased federal and state funding programs supporting alternate transportation and a recognition that bicycle-tourism can have significant economic impact through increased visitation numbers and related business expansion (Abbott 2010). Multi-use trails are
also increasingly valued as local amenities that contribute to a community’s “quality of life,” a factor heavily considered by residents and businesses when choosing locations. As multi-use trails tend to cross municipal boundaries, trail planning and maintenance is most often coordinated at the regional scale and developed with the support of a combination of local, state and federal funding sources. National Heritage Areas have played a role in both the visioning, planning and implementation of various multi-use trail development projects across the U.S as they both serve to connect regional historic sites and amenities and represent low-impact economic development strategies compatible with the historic and natural landscape.

One example is the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail of Northeast Pennsylvania that the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA) developed in partnership with the National Park Service, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Lackawanna County, the Lackawanna River Corridor Association and the Rail-Trail Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania. In addition to facilitating trail development and hosting trail-related events, the LHVA is also producing a Lackawanna Greenway Plan and Feasibility Study of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail in conjunction with local and regional partners in order to inventory and assess the cultural, historic and natural resources along the route and to determine a maintenance and future enhancements plan for the trail (Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority 2010).

In addition to facilitating planning, funding and construction of the trails themselves, heritage areas have also been involved in trail-based economic development initiatives that focus more specifically on the historic communities linked to these trails.
With similar community revitalization goals as the Main Street program and other place-based heritage development programs, these “Trail Town” programs aim at strengthening the connections between the waterways, the trail and the towns to maximize the local economic impact of trail users and recreational visitors. The Schuylkill River National Heritage Area of Southeastern PA hosted a “Trail Town” conference in 2010 to emphasize local resources and strategies to develop a trail-friendly community. Furthering this concept, the heritage area also administers a “Heritage Towns and Tours” grant program with the William Penn Foundation as a funding partner and provides communities with a Heritage Towns and Tours Toolkit to aid in local heritage development planning processes. Program goals include both connecting and promoting community resources such as trails to increase the number of visitors and visitor spending and also enhancing the visitor experience to heritage area communities. Grants are typically awarded for projects that involve informational, directional or interpretive signage; connections and gateways between communities and adjacent or nearby trails; recreational user amenities such as bike racks; and development of local heritage tours (Schuylkill River Heritage Area 2010).

**Adaptive Reuse of Historic Buildings**

As historic buildings are important to a community’s unique sense of place as remnants of traditional architectural styles and settlement patterns, the promotion of adaptive reuse projects that give new life to these structures and return them to productive use for the community is often part of the heritage area agenda. Wheeling National Heritage Area, headquartered in the City of Wheeling, WV, has been particularly successful in using heritage area funds to conduct architectural feasibility studies of
abandoned historic structures. In addition to providing technical assistance to property owners in navigating the redevelopment process, Wheeling NHA’s initial $54,000 investment leveraged more than $17 million in public and private investment in the redevelopment and reuse of four prominent historic buildings in the downtown (Proia 2005).

Encouraging and facilitating adaptive reuse of historic structures has also been a focus of the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor that follows the route of the Blackstone River through eastern Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island, a waterway and regional corridor whose mills played a very important role in early U.S. industrial growth and development before being largely abandoned as manufacturing relocated to the Sunbelt and overseas. The Blackstone Valley Corridor Commission has hosted statewide and regional forums aimed at facilitating mill reuse and addressing issues associated with restoring these large industrial structures to various productive uses by bringing together public officials, preservationists, financial institutions and the development community (Tuxill and Mitchell 2005). The Commission has also worked with municipalities in Massachusetts and Connecticut to include adaptive reuse overlay districts in local zoning ordinances that encourage reuse by allowing for more flexibility in architectural and site design and for a mix of possible uses (Tuxill and Mitchell 2005).

**Traditional Industry Support**

Heritage area programs have also been developed to support and promote specific industries that are considered vital to the preservation of a region’s heritage and traditional working landscapes such as forestry, agriculture or the artisan craft industry. The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area of Western North Carolina, for example,
maintains and publishes a Traditional Artist Directory to serve as a buyer’s or tourist’s guide to traditional craft artisans, musicians, dancers and storytellers of the region – providing exposure for local artisans with a small business operation to larger national and international markets via the web and coordinated marketing (Blue Ridge National Heritage Area 2010). The Appalachian Forest Heritage Area of the Allegheny Highlands region of West Virginia and Maryland is currently planning for an artisan and forest discovery center to be housed in a historic mill building in Elkins, WV that will both serve as an artisan incubator focused on wood products with common workspaces and low rents and also provide a retail outlet with exposure to tourists riding the adjacent scenic railroad (C-HOPE 2011).

Support initiatives related to the agricultural industry are also common heritage area strategies in rural areas through small farm workshops and outreach, support of farmers markets, industry surveys, and food system planning studies. For example, the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area of eastern Iowa produced a Study of Place Based Food Tourism in Northeast Iowa Communities in 2005 to explore local opportunities for food tourism festivals (Silos and Smokestacks 2011). The Last Green Valley, a national heritage area in eastern Connecticut and southern-central Massachusetts also produced a Farm Survey and Foodshed Plan in 2009 outlining the state of the present food system in southern New England and why the expansion of food production in the region may be successful (The Last Green Valley 2011).

**Grant Programs/Revolving Loan Funds**

In some cases heritage areas have managed to pool financial resources from various regional partners in order to set up a loan fund to support and provide technical
assistance to new and expanding small businesses in the heritage tourism industry. Such loans to small businesses administered through the designation of a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) are able to provide entrepreneurs with few assets or unusual business plans the access to capital and business counseling needed when traditional financial institutions consider them too high-risk. An example touted in a 2005 NPS report on Best Practices in Heritage Development is The Progress Fund established in 1997 by Southwestern Pennsylvania Industrial Heritage Route that travels through nine counties in Southwestern PA. Partners and financial supporters of The Progress Fund span across federal, state and local organizations to contribute to the funds success including the Westylvania Heritage Corporation, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and several Pittsburgh-based foundations. Though originally focused on small business assistance in the travel and tourism industry, the Fund will also lend to businesses looking to locate in historic buildings and has expanded in recent years to support small farmers within the region venturing into agri-tourism as well (Proia 2005).

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Participation

Heritage areas have also been incorporated into more top-down, institutionalized regional economic development processes in the past. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the product developed with broad base and diverse community participation that serves as an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies and is required by the Economic Development Association (EDA), a branch of the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, in order to apply for federal investment assistance (Dept. of Commerce 2011). Heritage area projects and objectives have been integrated
into CEDS documents as regional priorities and heritage area staff members have also served on CEDS steering committees, playing a role in guiding the development of the document. For example, both the Executive Director and Tourism Director of The Last Green Valley served as representatives on the coordinating committee for the 2007 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Five-Year Update for the Northeastern Connecticut Economic Partnership, an organization formed in 1999 by the joining of two regional planning commissions of Northeastern CT (Northeastern Connecticut Economic Partnership 2007).
CHAPTER 5
CASE STUDIES: NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

This chapter gives a brief overview of the individual heritage areas selected as case studies from which partners were identified for interviews. In providing information on the heritage area geographies, maturity (years since federal designation), nationally significant “stories,” mission and goals and types of economic development programming, this chapter also highlights the commonalities and differences between the different heritage areas and management entities that may correlate to partner interview results. Table 5.1 offers a brief snapshot of these heritage area characteristics to be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Entity</th>
<th>Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership</th>
<th>Schuylkill River National Heritage Area</th>
<th>Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority</th>
<th>The Last Green Valley, Inc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization-Type</td>
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<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Municipal Authority</td>
<td>Member-Supported Non-Profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Fifteen counties in PA, MD, WV &amp; VA</td>
<td>Five counties in southeastern PA</td>
<td>Five counties in northeastern PA</td>
<td>Thirty-two communities in eastern CT and southern central MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Scenic Byway Corridor</td>
<td>River Corridor</td>
<td>River Corridor</td>
<td>River Corridors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Designated</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1994</td>
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Table 5.1. Heritage Area Case Study Characteristics
Journey Through Hallowed Ground

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground NHA follows the U.S. and state routes that comprise a nationally designated scenic byway through four states along a corridor that connects Gettysburg, PA to Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s historic home outside of Charlottesville, VA. Encompassing a largely rural landscape with a strong agricultural tradition, regional heritage attractions include nine Presidential homes, a large concentration of Civil War battlefields, and eighteen historic Main Street communities amongst other scenic, historic and recreational amenities within short driving distance of Washington, D.C (See map in Figure 5.1 on following page).

The management entity, the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership, was formed in 2005 and the heritage area was federally designated through legislation passed in 2008. While most heritage areas began by facilitating a strategic planning process and engaging partners for the purpose of achieving federal designation, the Journey Through Hallowed Ground partnership was initially formed as a non-profit years prior to federal designation with the goals of protecting and coordinating management of the historic and scenic byway. The partnership subsequently researched federal programs that would be a good fit for their organizational structure and goals, ultimately choosing to pursue National Heritage Area and National Scenic Byway designation as the most appropriate means to supporting the partnership’s mission. Because of the formation of this heritage area centered on the scenic byway, management goals of the JTHG have a larger focus on transportation planning than most other heritage areas. Goals for the byway laid out in the JTHG management plan include conservation and preservation, byway facilities and enhancement, interpretation and education, heritage tourism, transportation and
coordination and management. The heritage area staff, board of trustees and advisors engage over 350 organizations at the local, regional and national level as partners in order to implement programming and achieve management plan goals (Journey Through Hallowed Ground 2010).

Figure 5.1. Journey Through Hallowed Ground Region (Source: Journey Through Hallowed Ground 2011)

The JTHG partnership has a strong focus on heritage tourism as a means to promote economic development in the region and implements various programs to enhance the quality of the visitor experience and boost tourism numbers. One way in which the JTHG engages partners and facilitates regional collaboration is through structured stakeholder standing committees. Committees that are more specifically economic development-oriented include the Destination Marketing Organization Committee (DMOC), consisting of tourism directors of the region’s fifteen counties, and the Main Street Committee, consisting of staff members from the region’s eighteen Main Street communities. Professional development for the tourism industry is also a key
focus of JTHG and the partnership administers a region-wide Certified Tourism Ambassador program. This accreditation program is offered to staff and volunteers at partner organizations and designed to give frontline hospitality employees the knowledge and inspiration necessary to create positive experiences for visitors. Other tourism-based initiatives include market research and survey-work to benefit partner organizations. In support for traditional industries along the byway, JTHG also sponsors and participates in events at the local level such as the Adams County (PA) “Ag Innovations Summit,” brainstorming future directions and strategies for the local agricultural industry (Journey Through Hallowed Ground 2010).

**Schuylkill River National Heritage Area**

The Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area encompasses the watershed of the Schuylkill River in southeastern PA, traversing Schuylkill, Berks, Chester, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties and the many communities linked by the river and shared histories. The region was designated as a National Heritage Area in 2000 in recognition of its national significance for the role that its historic, cultural and natural landscape played in the American, Industrial, and Environmental Revolutions. The vision for the region as laid out in the management plan include historic resources and landscapes preserved as part of community life, waters and other natural resources protected and restored, historic boroughs and towns revitalized through heritage-related economic development, increased outdoor recreational opportunities, and enhanced community pride and identity. Related to the heritage area’s work to promote the Schuylkill River as a resource for economic development, the management plan also lists
specific goals and strategies related to recreation, community revitalization and heritage tourism (Schuylkill River Heritage Area 2010).

Figure 5.2. Schuylkill River National Heritage Area Region  
(Source: Schuylkill River Heritage Area 2011)

Like the Journey Through Hallowed Ground, the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area is also managed by a non-profit, the Schuylkill River Greenway Association. The managing entity was founded decades prior to both state and national heritage area designation and has grown its mission and geographic scope to the present-day National Heritage Area territory as depicted in Figure 5.2. Partners from the economic development community that work with the managing entity and have also
been mini-grant recipients for local projects include community development corporations, main street programs and business associations.

In addition to the Heritage Towns and Tours program described in the previous chapter and the mini-grant program administered by SRHA, the heritage area has also performed valuable market research to support the private sector and promote entrepreneurship in heritage-based industries. For example, the 2004 Outdoor Recreation Business Study conducted in conjunction with the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources sought to determine what factors would encourage new business development within the heritage area as well as factors needed to sustain and/or expand existing businesses along the Schuylkill River Valley (Schuylkill River Heritage Area 2004). The heritage area has also jointly sponsored events supporting local artists such as the annual Arts and Photography Show and Sale centered on “Scenes of the Schuylkill River Heritage Area” and hosted in conjunction with an art gallery at a local community college (Schuylkill River Heritage Area 2010).

**Lackawanna Heritage Valley**

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley is a national and state heritage area based in Scranton, Pennsylvania that encompasses the Lackawanna River watershed across five counties of Northeastern PA. The heritage area is managed by the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA), which unlike the non-profit management entities of JTHG and SRHA, is a municipal authority of Lackawanna County. LHVA was established as the first State Heritage Park in Pennsylvania in 1991 and was designated as a National Heritage Area in 2000. Federal designation recognized the significant role the region played as a commercial center in the Industrial Revolution with its stories of
entrepreneurship and immigrant labor. In order to focus on the organization’s sustainability in supporting its various projects and programs, Heritage Valley Partners, Inc., a development arm of the LHVA, was also established in 2008 as a 501c3 organization to focus on development and expanded opportunities for funding (Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority 2010).

Located in a post-industrial region experiencing economic transition, the LHVA has played a significant role in supporting heritage-based economic development as a revitalization strategy for greater Scranton and communities of the Lackawanna River watershed through various initiatives. Taking a leadership role in promoting these initiatives, the director is also a frequent contributor to the Northeast Pennsylvania (NEPA) Business Journal, writing a monthly column about LHVA activities and Northeastern PA’s heritage development. Major partnership projects listed in LHVA’s 2009 “Community Update” report include engineering, design and development of the Scranton Riverwalk Trail and Lackawanna River Heritage Trail as well as a Steamtown National Historic Site marketing project conducted with the Lackawanna County Convention and Visitors Bureau. The LHVA also sponsors the Heritage Valley Roundtable, which is a monthly meeting of regional stakeholders aimed at promoting collaboration and sharing of best practices in heritage development and has provided seed money for the Heritage Explorer excursion train, the Heritage Explorer Bike Tour and various community-based festivals and events that bring visitors and tourism dollars to the region (Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority 2010).
The Last Green Valley

The Last Green Valley is a 35-town region spanning eastern Connecticut and southern central Massachusetts and defined by the Quineboag and Shetucket River watersheds. Though federally designated as the Quineboag and Shetucket Rivers Valley
National Heritage Corridor in 1994, the region is now popularly known as The Last Green Valley (TLGV), as is the member-supported non-profit organization that manages the heritage corridor. Its national significance stems from the fact that it is the only region remaining within the coastal metropolitan Boston-to-Washington corridor that has largely retained the green pastures, woodlands and hinterland character that have defined the landscape for centuries, due in no small part to the lack of an interstate highway connecting the population centers of Hartford, CT and Providence, RI (The Last Green Valley 2010).

![Map of New England showing the TLGV region](image)

**Figure 1.4. The Last Green Valley Region (Source: The Last Green Valley 2011)**

The Last Green Valley’s mission in the region is cited as preserving the significant natural and cultural resources while encouraging compatible economic development with *tourism and outreach* and *economic development* listed as two specific organizational program areas. The heritage area was also notably the first of the National Heritage Area management entities to prepare a sustainability plan, *The Trail to 2015*, as a step forward in its efforts to reach financial self-sufficiency in its operations and
programming as a member-supported non-profit organization (The Last Green Valley 2010).

Programs supporting economic and community development include seasonal promotional events such as Walktober, a series of guided hikes and tours highlighting the region’s assets; Tastes of the Valley, a sustainable agriculture event and TLGV fundraiser; and the Source to Sea Expedition, a series of paddling and riverside events designed to showcase the scenic qualities of the Thames River watershed from its source to mouth at the Long Island Sound. TLGV also offers a comprehensive annual Tourism Promotion package composed of a visitors guide, website support cooperative advertising opportunities and visitor information distribution and support and staff also works with area chambers of commerce to operate regional visitors centers. TLGV has also implemented industry support programming, having prepared a Farm Survey and Foodshed Plan in 2009 aimed at emphasizing the economic value of the working landscape and providing comprehensive direction for the expansion of agriculture in the region. In addition to heritage-related economic development initiatives, heritage area staff also played a role in a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process as mentioned in the previous chapter (The Last Green Valley 2010).
CHAPTER 6
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Pool of Interviewees and Respondents

In mid-February 2011, economic development community and private sector partners of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground (JHTG), Schuylkill River Heritage Area (SRHA), Lackawanna Heritage Valley (LHV) and The Last Green Valley (TLGV) were identified as the pool of potential interview respondents for this study via publicly-available heritage area web sites, management plans and annual reports. The intent of the interviews was to gain an understanding of the nature of the partner organizations’ working relationships with the heritage area and to assess the effectiveness of heritage area engagement with partners from the economic development discipline by identifying characteristics of strong collaborative partnerships.

Staff members from thirty-seven partner organizations were initially contacted via e-mail to solicit participation in the study. In cases where a response to the introductory e-mail was not received, a follow-up phone call was made approximately one week later in order to schedule a time for a phone interview. The interview questions were designed for the staff leaders of partner organizations and the pool of potential interviewees was comprised primarily of staff directors, program managers or business owners. In the case of larger organizations that employed more specialized staff, an economic development specialist or director of partnerships and outreach was contacted if said staff member was deemed by the researcher or staff director to be the more appropriate interviewee for the purposes of this study. Due to the limited number of partner organizations from the economic development community and private sector from heritage areas selected for
case studies, the pool of potential interviewees was expanded beyond the initial target organizations of Chambers of Commerce (private) and economic development offices (public) to include all types of economic development and private sector partners. Between mid-February and mid-March 2011, the research ultimately yielded a total of ten interview respondents, which included six interviews conducted by the researcher over the phone and four cases in which the interviewee requested to respond in writing via email due to time constraints. The pool of interviewees consisted of staff members from a wide variety of organization-types ranging from a small business to a county-level municipal office (Table 6.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Type</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development Corp.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Revitalization Corp.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Office</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Department</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Association</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention and Visitors Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street Program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Business</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1. Organization-Type of Interview Respondents

This research also collected information regarding the economic development goals of partner organizations in order to gain a general understanding of how these organizations function in the region and to place the heritage area partnership in the context of the partner organizations’ overall mission. Figure 6.1 presents a sample of the operational goals of the partner organizations as derived from corresponding web sites and interview responses.
Figure 6.1. Partner Organizations' Goals in the Region

Barriers to achieving partner organizations’ mission and goals within the region cited by interview respondents were primarily tied to issues of funding and the recent national economic downturn. In the case of semi-public organizations such as Main Street or community development corporations, state budget cuts in key program areas have in some cases prevented implementation of new projects and programs and caused a scramble to line up funding from private sources in order to continue existing programming. Responses from Chambers of Commerce indicated that the poor economic conditions have affected chamber membership levels as many businesses view such partnerships as an unnecessary expenditure in leaner economic times. A convention and visitors bureau (CVB) also cited the economic downturn as the greatest barrier to
achieving the organization’s goals as overall economic conditions determine how much visitors will be spending on both business and leisure travel. The CVB also noted that effectiveness in promoting their area as a destination is an important factor in achieving the organization’s goals in this economic climate, as it determines what share they receive of travel to the region.

An additional challenge mentioned included a lack of local awareness of the value of and potential threats to the community’s heritage assets. A partner organization of The Last Green Valley also noted the tax structure in the state of Connecticut, which causes individual municipal governments to be over-reliant on property taxes, as a significant barrier. This structural factor often spawns inter-municipal competition for commercial and industrial development and serves as a barrier to regionalism.

Research Questions

The majority of interview respondents (80%) from economic development organizations and private sector stakeholders that participated in this research believed that heritage area engagement with their organization was strong, and felt a sense of interdependence with heritage area mission and goals. Two respondents described having very little heritage area participation or engagement, however. This suggests that different heritage areas have varying levels of engagement with economic development community and private sector partners, providing us an opportunity to explore the qualitative factors that affect heritage area engagement with organizations from this discipline.

Of the eight interview respondents that considered their organizations active heritage area partners, the age of the partnerships (years since initiated) fell into a wide
range and followed no particular patterns across different heritage area or organization types. Roughly half of the interview respondents reported that their organizations have worked with the heritage area management entity for the past six to ten years. A chamber of commerce and business association reported the age of the partnership as two years, which may perhaps relate to a trend over the past decade of heritage areas more actively reaching out to the business community noted in an article exploring the heritage area program as an approach to regional planning (Means 1999). Though all of the organizations interviewed were listed on heritage area web sites and reports as partners to some capacity, two of the interview respondents did not consider their organizations active “partners” of the heritage area and cited minimal to no contact with heritage area staff during their tenure as director. Though a particular reason was not explicitly cited, this lack of interaction may be due to a combination of a variety of operational and organizational factors including staff continuity, resource constraints, the organizations’ priorities or geographic-focus of heritage area programming.

**Type of Partnership with NHA Management Entity**

The term *partnership*, as used in both the field of planning and in the heritage area collaborative context, implies collaboration and sharing of resources such as money, staff or knowledge. Though the types of projects and programs administered by heritage areas and their partners to support economic development goals were described in a previous chapter, the partner interviews provided insights into the specific types and dynamic nature of partnerships formed between the heritage area management entity and the economic development community and private sector to implement these programs. A common denominator amongst interview respondents was that the heritage area provided
funding, coordination, or assistance with marketing materials or events. In some cases
the partner organization provided funding or technical assistance to the heritage area
management entity as well depending on the nature of the project and resources available,
indicating a certain level of partnership flexibility in which partners play different roles
under different contexts. In a formalized example of information exchange and
networking, all respondents from the Lackawanna Heritage Valley, with the exception of
a new small business, were participants in the monthly Heritage Roundtable. This
region-wide forum in which regional heritage site managers and stakeholders share ideas
and best practices is hosted and facilitated by the Heritage Valley Authority. The JHTG
case provides another example of active networking. A convention and visitors bureau in
the JHTG region participates in the heritage area’s formalized Certified Tourism
Ambassador program that provides hospitality training and accreditation to partner
organization staff and volunteers. Other organizations indicated that their working
partnership with the heritage area included an on-going informal knowledge exchange
among other coordinated events, marketing and grant applications.

Technical assistance projects included assistance in mapping cultural and heritage
resources, implementation of a local bike-share program in a community connected to a
regional trail system, and also assistance with an organization’s strategic planning
process as they broaden their scope from a narrow focus on downtown revitalization to a
larger community revitalization and heritage development mission. Other forms of
working partnerships mentioned included staff members serving on heritage area boards
and formalized standing committees. In one case, the director of a municipal office also
worked with heritage area staff to host mill revitalization seminars within the region.
Two respondents mentioned that their organizations have shared office and meeting spaces with the heritage area for various workshops, events and meetings as well. The range of partnerships was clearly quite substantial and the heritage area framework demonstrated adaptability in mobilizing a range of available resources through partnerships.

This research also sought to explore whether heritage area partnerships with the economic development community and private sector fell into the category of project-based, finite *joint ventures* or were considered more *open-ended partnerships* in which goals, projects and commitments are adaptable to new opportunities for collaboration from the partner perspective (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002). Of the eight respondents that considered their organizations active heritage area partners, seven respondents described the partnership as an on-going collaboration. The on-going nature of the partnerships was described in different contexts, including continual participation in the monthly heritage roundtable in the case of Lackawanna Heritage Valley, staff members from partner organizations serving on the heritage area board or vice versa, or sharing staff in continually maintaining the operations of regional visitors centers in the case of The Last Green Valley. Partnerships were also described as an on-going dialogue and information exchange concerning projects, funding alerts or general best practices in heritage development. Based on previous studies regarding types of public private partnerships, these open-ended, sustained collaborative efforts are commonly found to utilize available resources more efficiently than the joint venture model in which organizations interact briefly around an issue or project (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002).
Though a Main Street organization noted very little heritage area engagement due to both the organization’s size limiting their capacity to reach out to the heritage area management entity and a lack of initiative on the part of the heritage area in building a partnership, the Director did indicate interest in a stronger partnership:

“We really don’t [partner], but we would like to. We are a small organization and need [the heritage area management entity] to take the initiative. For example, twice a year we have [events] along the river and would benefit from a mini-grant as little as $500.”

While findings from previous studies on successful tourism partnerships emphasized the importance of having a formal cooperative agreement in place early on in the partnership to formalize goals and responsibilities (Selin and Chavez 1991), this research neither found formalized contractual agreements to be the norm, nor that having such formalized agreements in place necessarily correlated with strong collaborative partnerships. All except two interview respondents characterized their involvement with the heritage area as informal with the partnership operating solely on verbal agreements. In one case of a business association, a memorandum of understanding undersigned the partnership, and in another case of a community revitalization corporation, the partnership was governed by contractual agreements tied specifically to grant funding and expectations for matching contributions as well as timeframes for project implementation. Interview responses from the community revitalization corporation that maintained more formalized heritage area partnership did indicate a strong sense of interdependency and positive impacts of heritage area participation, which will be discussed in greater detail in later sections of the chapter. However since it was the only formalized partnership included in this research, it was difficult to correlate partnership
strength to the presence of a formal cooperative agreement. On the other side of the coin, an interview respondent specifically mentioned the merits of an informal partnership:

“There’s not a lot of bureaucracy, which is definitely a positive. There’s a real openness amongst all of the partners. We probably should formalize more, but we just haven’t. We just have such a good working relationship.”

A general sense of “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it” emerged from a few interview responses in relation to the partnership informality. Most interview respondents also referenced their organization’s strategic plan as a guiding document, though it was unclear as to whether these plans addressed heritage area partnership goals, responsibilities or expectations.

**Partner Motivations for NHA Involvement**

Previous studies have found that a necessary condition for effective partnerships is a shared understanding in a community or region about an issue and the framework in which it should be addressed (Waddock 1989). In order to further delve into the strength of partnership engagement and overlap of the missions and goals of heritage areas and economic development partner organizations, this research inquired into partner organizations’ motivations for heritage area participation. More specifically, interview questions sought to reveal evidence of salient issues these organizations felt could be effectively address by partnering with the heritage area.

The primary items mentioned were practical economic issues, particularly available mini-grant opportunities and increased ability to leverage funding, and a structural issue of avoiding duplication of services. Motivating factors more specific to the heritage area mission of place-building and heritage tourism promotion were also a
focus. The expansion of hiking, biking and waterway trail systems and efforts to build the necessary connections from trails to communities were a common motivating factor in heritage area participation in recognition of the ability of trails to both improve a community’s quality of life and create economic development opportunities. This may particularly be the case in heritage areas that are shaped by river corridors, as are three of the four heritage areas included in this study, that were previously polluted due to historic industrial activity and have since been significantly cleaned up. River restorations often prompt a local “rediscovery” of the waterway as a recreational and scenic resource where it had previously been a liability. Heritage area activities promoting mill revitalization were also a motivating factor, with overlapping goals between the heritage areas and a municipal partner in The Last Green Valley region, as an example.

In addition to the specific mentions of trail system development and mill revitalization, responses also reflected a more general recognition that heritage area activities promote amenities that attract businesses, citizens and visitors to the region. In an indication of a partner organization’s sentiments aligning with the broader heritage area mission of promoting “sense of place,” the director of a municipal office commented that:

“People want to work and live in an historic area where preservation and conservation is paramount and there are cultural and geographic assets which abound.”

Interview responses of staff from organizations that did not necessarily consider themselves active heritage area partners still indicated potential motivations for partnering and issues they felt could be addressed through heritage area partnerships. Though the director of an economic development corporation noted very little direct
interaction with the heritage area, it was mentioned that the organization would like to see the heritage area facilitate a venue in which regional best practices and strategies in promoting industrial development could be shared amongst economic development practitioners from areas with large amounts of publicly managed lands. The director noted that assisting firms in locating industrial and commercial sites can be a challenge in such areas due to concern over viewsheds and use of adjacent sites degrading from the visitor experience. This issue could be an additional motivating factor for heritage area participation and a future opportunity for increased engagement with the industrial development community.

**NHA Participation Expectations and Depth of Commitment**

In recognition that the economic development community and private sector often measure success in traditional metrics such as job retention, job creation, expansion of the local tax base, etc., this research sought to explore whether results or outcomes of heritage area participation have met, fell short or exceeded expectations from the perspective of this interest group. Broad and informal expectations for partnership results were noted such as “completion of the project,” though this research did not find significant evidence of *formal* expectations for either resources committed to the heritage area partnership or expectations for results. The most common expectations for heritage area participation included information exchange and coordination on events and marketing. In the single case of the partnership with contractual agreements, specific expectations included a 10% local match for grant funding and project implementation timelines.
Only four respondents referenced any specific criteria used to evaluate the partnership. “Increased tourism” was the most common response, with “increased revenue” and “improved quality of life” also mentioned. No respondent indicated there was a formal mechanism in place to evaluate the partnership based on these metrics, however, as this study did not find many instances of formal cooperative agreements underlying these partnerships. Interview questions regarding expectations for participation, criteria for partnership success and reasons for continuing the partnership did, however, reveal the great extent to which certain partner organizations felt that the successes of heritage area programs were tied to their own successes. A Chamber of Commerce partner stated that while they don’t have specific expectations for results, they continue because of general successful outcomes in heritage area collaboration:

“We just know that when we do events together, we get twice as many people that attend, and if we send out joint press releases, they are twice as successful.”

Responses reflecting more broad evaluation metrics than specific economic outcomes emerged as well. A community revitalization corporation noted their expectations currently are just successful completion of the collaborative heritage area projects in relation to trails and destination marketing. In regards to reasons for continuing the partnership, comments from a convention and visitors bureau also indicate a strong sense of interdependence between their organization and the heritage area:

“The [heritage area] is all about celebrating and sharing the rich history and culture of this region, and cultural and heritage tourism are absolutely essential to the success of tourism in [our area]. Results have met our expectations.”

The range in maturity of the partnerships included in this study may correlate with the varied responses related to partnership expectations for participation and outcomes as a
few interview respondents noted that the partnerships was still too new to really evaluate or address whether results had met, fell short of or exceeded expectations. Because of this and the lack of formal mechanisms for evaluation, interview responses were generally broad, though recognition of interdependence between organizations was threaded throughout responses. It was also noted that respondents from active heritage area partner organizations chose to reflect on project successes and not project shortcomings.

Roles of NHA Management Entity in a Dynamic System

The variety of programming implemented by heritage areas and types of partnerships formed with the economic development community and private sector translates into heritage area staff wearing many hats within the region and having the flexibility to play various roles under different contexts as necessary to move projects forward. The responses from partner organizations involved in this study confirmed the findings from previous NHA Sustainability Studies (Laven et al. 2010) that heritage areas play a multitude of roles in a dynamic network system. Roles referenced by interview respondents included facilitator of partnerships, motivator, fundraiser, informational resource, “a tool in the toolbox,” consultant and educational tool. This type of partnership creativity/flexibility had previously been identified as one of the key ingredients associated with effective network governance (Innes and Booher 2003). Social partnership theory has noted that these types of dynamic relationships often lead to continued collaboration and resource-sharing between organizations (Laven et al. 2010). For example, an interview respondent from a municipal office spoke of the dynamics of the partnership in this manner:
“It changes – it depends on the project. With the [project], they’ve been helpful from a funding standpoint, but their staff has also given great advice. There’s a lot of dialogue. Our partnership can range from us sharing space to our organizations sitting down and fleshing out a project.”

Specific references to leadership included both public engagement and also facilitating cooperation amongst various organizations and government bodies throughout the region. In reference to a large event coordinated by the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, a partner noted:

“Nobody’s worried about taking credit – some of that is [Lackawanna] Heritage Valley leadership. They provide a lot of positive motivation and really take the time to help out. The [Lackawanna] Heritage Valley adds a huge boon to the project.”

The heritage area’s leadership role in civic engagement regarding issue awareness and the promoting the value of the area’s heritage resources was mentioned by the owner of local business. The owner spoke of the heritage area as:

“…a leader in making the people in the area realize what the benefits are of having good natural resources and the benefits of taking care of them.”

Different partners are connected in different ways (Laven et al. 2010) depending on project or collaborative context to achieve multidisciplinary goals across resource stewardship and community and economic development. This research also found that the heritage area management entity was often referred as a leader or co-leader for the entire region in facilitating cooperation or serving as a catalyst in project implementation. Personal factors and the presence of strong leadership may also play a role in strengthening and sustaining partnerships as it was noted that three interview respondents
specifically referenced the name of the heritage area staff director when referring to the working relationship.

**Evolution of Partnership and Resetting of Goals**

Previous partnership studies found that it is important for the continued life of partnerships to set new goals periodically in order to maintain interest and avoid stagnation. This maturity phase of partnership development emphasizes a reevaluation of mission and broadening of purpose (Waddock 1989). In order to explore the level of partnership maturation in heritage area engagement of the economic development community and private sector, interview respondents were asked how the partnership had evolved over time or broadened to address a larger set of issues. While no heritage area partners noted a change in the level of formality or required commitment to the partnership over time, nor was there mention of formal mechanisms in place to reevaluate and set new goals for the partnership, four interview respondents felt as though the partnership with the heritage area had broadened over time to work together more often, take on larger projects and address a larger set of regional issues. One example was the willingness of the heritage area to expand their reach to additional towns not officially located within heritage area boundaries through cooperative marketing projects with a regional Chamber of Commerce. While only a portion of towns within the Chamber’s region were technically considered part of the heritage area, the management entity had the flexibility and willingness to “cast their net a little wider” to more effectively collaborate with the partnering organization as the partnership matured.

A community revitalization corporation noted that while the partnership with the heritage area originated with a grant application related to community links to regional
trails, the organization has expanded their working relationship with the heritage area to formally participate in a Heritage Towns program, which assists communities in strengthening their presence as a heritage destination by providing access to grant assistance, guidance on project implementation and infrastructure improvements. Other examples have included a municipal office partnering with the heritage area on an increasing number of different types of events over time and now also serving on heritage area boards. Another municipal office noted that the relationship was not very strong at first because the office was just getting set up. As the organization more firmly established its operations, the relationship with the heritage area strengthened and has since ramped up collaboration and sharing of ideas over time. The municipal office now participates in the Heritage Roundtable and shares board members on advisory councils with the heritage area.

Results with partnership maturation and resetting of goals did vary, however, as five of the interview respondents (50%) did not feel their organizations’ heritage area partnership had particularly evolved over time or broadened to address a larger set of issues and goals. Two of these respondents did not consider their organizations active heritage area partners and three respondents simply felt their working relationship had not changed over time, the latter citing no specific reasons or sentiment that this was an issue. Of the latter respondents, a small business commented that they could not report any broadening of the partnership because the partnership was so new. The owner noted, however, that they’re “open to be involved with them on as many levels as they can” and “hope for an on-going partnership.” It was also mentioned that they hope to give back to
the heritage area as well for maintenance of the regional trail system it maintains when
the business organizes fundraising events and races.

Impacts of NHA Participation on Partner Organizations

The final series of interview questions sought to explore the ways in which the
partner organizations may have been impacted by heritage area participation whether in
relation to increased capacity, organizational structure, strategic planning or prioritization
of objectives in their economic development activities. These types of impacts are not
often directly reflected in traditional and quantifiable measures of economic
development, such as jobs created or increased tourism spending, though the importance
of these process-based impacts as an intermediary factor affecting economic outcomes
should still be emphasized and communicated to policymakers and stakeholders.

The head of a municipal office felt that her organization’s capacity to take on
projects has been very much affected by the heritage area presence and partnership,
noting that:

“Knowing that resource is there does affect the things we decide to take on – whether it’s
expanding the [museum] or applying for grants together. They do play such a major role.
If it ever went away I think people would really be affected here.”

In another example, an organization that originally formed as a traditional Main
Street program has recently expanded its vision and mission greatly to become a
comprehensive community revitalization organization through its work with the heritage
area. The partnership has led to a broader rediscovery and awareness of local heritage
and recreational assets:

“We realized the majority of our assets have to do with heritage, recreational
opportunities and culture. That is why we’ve changed our vision and mission to more
reflect that arm of our operations. We’ve broadened our horizons, getting away more from strictly downtown promotion and reaching out to the regional, statewide and national market.”

In another instance of heritage area participation leading an organization to take on more regional scope, the director of a Chamber of Commerce noted that the heritage area partnership has led the organization to be recognized as more of a regional agent, encouraging increased membership beyond the municipal boundaries of the small city in which it is based:

“It had previously been a challenge to build that bridge outside our backyard. Partnering with an organization like [the heritage area management entity] has kept us connected regionally – bringing recognition and additional partnerships.”

Previous assessments of the partnership networks in the NPS’ sustainability studies conducted at three individual heritage areas indicated a subtheme of venue for partnership-making in which the heritage area’s regional focus and integrated approaches across various interest groups created opportunities for new partnerships (Laven et al. 2010). This study inquired into whether heritage area participation has led to increased communication or collaboration with other economic development organizations within the region or organizations from other interests groups such as historic preservation or conservation. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, not all interview respondents were able to speak to this potential impact of heritage area participation. Two respondents indicated that heritage participation had led to increased communication and partnerships with historical and recreational groups. Another respondent from a Chamber of Commerce referenced having been able to network with other local and regional organizations through the Heritage Valley Roundtable hosted by LHVA and
bring them on as members of the chamber. Large coordinated events with multiple stakeholders involved, such as the “Arts & Fire” Industrial Arts Festival in the Lackawanna Heritage Valley or the “Source to Sea” event in The Last Green Valley, were also mentioned as a venue in which the heritage area facilitated communication and served as a “central hub” (Laven et al. 2010) for partnership networks across the regional economic development community and other interest groups.

Barriers to Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships

This research also sought to explore potential barriers to sustaining collaborative partnerships with heritage areas in order to identify opportunities and make recommendations for more effective engagement of the economic development community and private sector in heritage area participation and regional collaboration. In addition to an interview question specifically regarding ways in which the heritage area could improve the partnership, this research found evidence of certain operational, organizational and geographic factors affecting the nature and/or strength of the partnerships threaded throughout interview responses.

One operational consideration is the fact that many heritage areas are reaching their “sunset dates” of congressionally authorized operational funding, which arrives typically fifteen-years after original designation. While some heritage areas have sought congressional reauthorization for funding, the current fiscal climate has led others to transition or start planning to transition to a non-profit organizational structure and in some cases forming a development arm (501c3) of the organization. Regional stakeholders and potential partners originally considered the federal funding administered through the heritage area management entities as an additional pot of funding entering the
region, but heritage areas are now in some cases being perceived as competition for existing scarce public and private funding sources. This is particularly an issue considering that funding constraints were the most commonly cited concerns of partner organizations regarding barriers to achieving goals. Interview respondents mentioned that the heritage area would need to take extra care to foster a sense of interdependence and work very closely with existing organizations for joint-grant applications and fundraising activities in order to avoid this negative perception and sense that another organization is now competing for the same limited pot of funding. Another interview respondent mentioned that heritage area efforts to develop a volunteer corps would also be critical to increase operational capacity through activities not tied to funding.

An organizational factor that emerged from this study as a challenge to sustaining collaborative partnerships with the economic development community is continuity of staff, particularly in the general absence of formalized partnerships. Three interview respondents had recently taken on their roles as director of partner organizations. The director of a Chamber of Commerce specifically mentioned:

“Unfortunately because of limited resources, we haven’t had an opportunity to create much over the last year. I’ve only been here for a year and inherited a lot of loose ends. The focus is currently more on rebuilding and reorganizing. We plan on becoming more engaged with [the heritage area management entity] going forward.”

In addition to instances of staff turnover, the small business participating in this study had only recently opened and was currently focused on establishing itself.

Staff size on the part of both the heritage area and partner organizations was also mentioned as a limiting organizational factor. One organization mentioned the small size
of their staff as limiting their ability to engage in partnerships with the heritage area, particularly without sufficient initiative taken by the heritage area management entity in reaching out and facilitating communication. A recommendation for improved heritage area communication with regional stakeholders and partners, particularly those with limited staff capacity, included having a section of the heritage area web site that zeroes in on opportunities or threats for each specific district or creating an email newsletter that focuses more on these issues and opportunities than on fundraising and marketing. In another staff-related comment, a partnering organization mentioned as a constraint that the tourism coordinator on the heritage area staff is currently only part-time. It was noted that the presence of a full-time staff member dedicated to tourism programming would likely expand the partnership and create many more opportunities for collaboration with the heritage area.

Though the vast majority of interview respondents from the economic development community and private sector found significant overlap between their organization’s missions and goals and those of the heritage area, a disconnect was found in the instance of an economic development corporation in the area of industrial development. An interviewee noted that aiding businesses in locating appropriate land for industrial operations in an area with large amounts of public lands and great concern over surrounding viewsheds is a significant challenge. Though the interview responses from this organization reflected a lack of perceived overlap between the goals of heritage area operations and economic development activities within the region, the desire for opportunities to network with other economic development agencies within the region that operate in areas with similar amounts of historic battlefields and public lands was
mentioned. The potential disconnect with economic development organizations in areas with more industrially based economies was also mentioned by a partner in The Last Green Valley. It was noted that their organization worked with the heritage area often, finding significant operational overlap with their institutionally based local economy and focus on tourism. The respondent then indicated that other economic development organizations in the region operating in more rural and industrially based economies are considerably less engaged in The Last Green Valley.

Perceived geographic dimensions also may play a role in sustaining collaborative partnerships with the economic development community and private sector. Two respondents felt that heritage area activities and stakeholder engagement efforts overlooked their more rural communities and were considerably more focused on the larger population centers within their respective regions. Though fully developed responses weren’t received from all interviewees, responses varied as to whether or not the defined region of the heritage areas reasonably matched up to partner organizations’ notion of the regional market or regional economy. These “regions” were found to match up “to a certain degree,” but responses received often referenced a larger territory for business development and tourism marketing/coordination beyond heritage area borders. The JTHG region stretching from Gettysburg, PA to Monticello in VA was also specifically mentioned as more “battlefield-related” than a region that ties together areas with similar economies. This type of region or corridor of course lends itself very well to coordinated heritage development, but may present certain constraints in expanding economic development strategies and community revitalization beyond boosting the tourism industry. These geographic factors potentially affecting partnership engagement
were not fully explored by this research, though heritage area boundaries and geographic focus may be an interesting dimension to investigate in future studies.
CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis examines the National Heritage Area program framework as a means to facilitate regional cooperation in economic development by engaging various stakeholders from the economic development community and private sector. The research finds that these collaborative partnerships can serve as an effective and efficient means to mobilize available resources and successfully integrate local projects and grassroots economic development practice into larger regional goals. This research applied both primary and secondary data collection methods to provide organizational and programmatic context to heritage area partnerships, to provide an overview of the types of economic development programming implemented by heritage areas and to qualitatively assess the strength and sustainability of collaborative partnerships with this interest group from the partner perspective. Effective heritage engagement was assessed through the exploration of various partnership dimensions including the nature of the partnership motivations for partnering, evolution of the partnership, expectations for participation and results, and the extent to which heritage area participation has impacted partner organizations in composition, programming focus, program results or attitudes towards regionalism amongst other attributes.

Summary of Findings

Though this study found the strength of partnerships and level of engagement with the economic development community and private sector to vary across heritage area partnerships spanning four different heritage areas, the large majority (80% of interviewees considered the heritage area to be an active regional partner and serving in a
leadership role within a dynamic network of regional partners. It seems that there is a clear role for partnerships among heritage areas and economic development and private sector organizations as these findings were similar to previous studies exploring heritage area partnership networks across the various disciplines (Laven et al. 2010).

One indicator of strong partnerships found in this study was the organizational flexibility and ability of the heritage area management entity to play a variety of important roles when engaging partners from the economic development community and private sector, confirming findings from a study of successful voluntary tourism partnerships with the USDA Forest Service (Selin and Chavez 1991). A sense of interdependence and recognition of important regional issues and the framework in which to address them shared between heritage areas and partnering organizations were also themes that emerged throughout interview responses of organizations with strong collaborative partnerships.

Additional indicators of successful partnership engagement included a broadening of partnership goals and objectives over time to address a larger set of regional issues or work on an increasing number of projects. Respondents found that heritage area participation positively impacted their capacity, increased the number or size of projects a partner felt they could take on, and also encouraged partner organizations to participate in regional forums or operate as a more regional agent. For example, the working relationship with the heritage area led a partner organization to expand their program scope from a narrow focus on the downtown to a more comprehensive approach to community revitalization, heritage development and regional linkages to the a river corridor.
Barriers to sustaining collaborative partnerships with the economic development community surfaced as well. The most commonly cited were organizational factors related to low staff size and high staff turnover and also operational factors related to where partner organizations placed heritage development and tourism as a priority. Narrow heritage area geographies that exclude larger areas for business development and geographic focus on more urbanized areas may also affect the ability to engage members of the economic development community or private sector in sustained partnerships.

Though this research hypothesized that bureaucratic procedures may potentially serve as a barrier to sustaining heritage area partnerships, this was not cited as an issue in interview responses as most (80%) of these partnerships operated on verbal agreements alone and the other two respondents did not express dissatisfaction with their contractual agreements. It was also hypothesized that individual organizations not wanting to “give up turf” would serve as a barrier to facilitating cooperation, and this was not found to be the case for this particular pool of interview respondents. Instead, the concern was more financial. Because of the difficult economic times and reduced federal funding for the heritage areas, some groups feared that the heritage areas would evolve into competition for scarce funding as heritage area management entities form development arms and work towards financial self-sufficiency.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews conducted for this research and time constraints of both interview responses and the researcher left certain gaps in the data where either the respondent chose to change the topic of conversation or not answer specific questions. These factors along with the small number of interview responses (N = 10) limited the ability of this research to present any firm statistical findings that could
be generalized to a larger pool of heritage area partnerships. Though the research originally intended to identify instances of policy-learning common to systems of network governance and how partnerships responded and adapted to changing external political or economic conditions, interviews did not present any specific qualitative examples of this occurring. Because of this, a research sub-question was adjusted to focus more specifically on the flexibility in partnership roles and dynamic nature of the partnership system over time.

**Implications for Policymakers, Heritage Area Staff and Partners**

The overall results from this study can help both further understand the nature of heritage area partnerships and help guide strategies in engaging in and maintaining ongoing collaborative partnerships with the economic development community and private sector. Confirming previous findings from Laven et al. (2010), a critical implication for policymakers is an understanding that *network governance* is the appropriate framework through which to evaluate heritage area implementation and that the building of a partnership network is an appropriate measure of heritage area effectiveness. This research also suggests that the heritage area programs serve to increase regional capacity for economic development through increased collaboration and enhanced social capital among stakeholders from the economic development community and private sector. When addressing questions of program funding and return on federal investment, these findings should encourage policymakers to approach this network development function as an important intermediary factor in connecting processes and more traditional metrics of economic outcomes.
From an operational perspective, the most critical factor identified in successfully building partnership networks and engaging the economic development community and private sector was management entity flexibility in the ability to play different partnership roles where necessary under different contexts. Additional success attributes and valued heritage area functions are awareness campaigns to emphasize the value of local heritage assets to the public and stakeholders and the economic value of “quality of life” factors. Institutionalized programming for regional knowledge exchange and building stakeholder consensus on shared opportunities and challenges were also important heritage area roles within the region. Examples of such institutionalized collaborative programming would be the Heritage Valley Roundtable in the Lackawanna Heritage Valley or the Heritage Towns and Tours program in the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area.

Findings from this study also suggest opportunities for heritage area staff and program administrators to overcome organizational and operational barriers and more effectively engage the economic development community and private sector partners. Though this research did not address strategies for achieving heritage area financial self-sustainability as their terms for federal operational funding reach a “sunset date,” the manner in which heritage areas approach this issue was mentioned in multiple responses as a concern as partners potentially compete with heritage areas for scarce financial resources. It will become increasingly important to focus on evaluation and apply a National Heritage Area program theory model that attempts to “measure the glue” and successfully convey the role of the partnership system as “greater than the sum of its parts” (Laven et al. 2010) to make the case for continued federal funding.
One specific recommendation to address certain constraints found in this research would be enhanced communication and outreach strategies to smaller organizations in more rural areas to create more awareness regarding opportunities for heritage area participation, funding programs, or collaborative approaches to address localized issues. An interview respondent recommended a periodic newsletter or section of heritage area web pages targeted specifically towards partners and potential partners outlining opportunities and threats for each district to be capitalized on or addressed.

Though industrial development may not often be a specific goal of heritage area management plans, it is important to recognize that a strong tax base is necessary to support visitor services, such as road maintenance or emergency assistance, in rural areas with a heavy tourism flow. Another recommendation is facilitating regional communication in sharing best practices on balancing the industrial development activities with historic landscape preservation interests. Heritage areas can play a more proactive role in promoting compatible industries or appropriate site locations as opposed to just speaking out against incompatible industrial and commercial uses. Though some heritage areas do already work to promote green industries with their region, this is a sector in which heritage area management entities could promote regional cooperation and assist industrial development beyond tourism.

**Future Areas for Research**

The small number of partner interviews conducted for this study (N = 10) is a key limitation to the external validity of the research findings. This research originally intended to include a larger set of primary data for the qualitative analysis, but the masters thesis timeframe, number of publicly identifiable economic development partners
of individual heritage areas and staff availability among partner organizations proved significant constraints in achieving this research goal. The wide range of organization-types included in this research as partners from the economic development community and private sector also made it difficult to control for organizational characteristics and goals and limited the ability to generalize findings. Future research could test the findings of this study by considering a larger, more representative sample of heritage area partners from the economic development community and private sector or could choose to focus on particular types of organizations with a more traditional economic development focus (industrial development corporation, Chambers of Commerce, etc.) across a larger number of heritage areas to control for varied economic development missions and goals of different organization-types. Further engagement of and input from heritage area staff in future studies could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the partnership process and potentially reveal a dimension of interpersonal factors that affect the ability to sustain collaborative partnerships.

Since this scope of this study was limited to the National Heritage Area program model in assessing partnerships for heritage-related economic development, additional research in the broader field of regional partnerships for economic development could assess effectiveness across program models, comparing the National Heritage Area program to other top-down or bottom-up regional economic development initiatives. Additional regional program models could include the Appalachian Regional Commission, a federal-state partnership that operates across thirteen states in the Appalachian Region working to create opportunities for self-sustaining economic development, or the Northern Forest Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to
working with others to build a sustainable economy, revitalize the region’s communities, and conserve the landscape across northern Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York.

Further understanding of the heritage area partnership networks and the heritage area role as the central hub across various interest groups is critical to furthering the heritage area research agenda in making connections between the enhanced capacity of these collaborative partnerships and how this network-based system ultimately impacts and correlates to tangible economic outcomes. Research that continues to shed light on the adaptable system of network governance that develops as heritage areas engage partners across disciplines will help both stakeholders and policymakers to fully embrace this partnership factor as an important link in regional economic development processes (Laven et al. 2008). Equally important for the continuance of the National Heritage Area program is the ability of heritage areas to communicate a full extent of return on federal, state or private investment beyond traditional economic metrics and impact models.

A partner in The Last Green Valley region voiced the case for collaboration in regional partnerships best:

“What we’re talking about is absolutely essential to survive and be successful in this funding environment. Before you could start any organization and always get money. In New England in particular, we have this home-rule attitude. Regionalization is the only way. In combining assets, money, staff or people, we should be able to get twice as much work done.”

Though this study examined collaborative partnerships and regional cooperation specifically within the heritage area program context, findings and recommendations also apply to other regional initiatives that operate across political boundaries to coordinate
and balance goals of sustainable economic development and large-scale landscape preservation. These partnerships and the establishment of a collaborative framework amongst regional stakeholders can lend to sustained cooperation amongst both economic development stakeholders and other interest groups under a common mission, or “a shared understanding of opportunities and challenges in the region,” as summed up by the director a municipal economic development office. This type of regional collaborative model facilitated by the National Heritage Area program has become increasingly important in efficiently utilizing available resources to maximize impacts in promoting regional economic health while preserving a distinct sense of place.
APPENDIX A

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS’ METRICS IN ACHIEVING GOALS

Partner organizations were asked to describe the metrics used in evaluating impacts and progress towards achieving goals. The use of a strategic plan to evaluate accomplishments was the most common response, though a wide range of responses was received due to the variation in organization-type. This research intended to use this data to provide additional context to metrics used to evaluate the heritage area partnerships, but found in interview responses that formal metrics were not generally used for partnership evaluation. Interview responses also may have given a more comprehensive set of metrics were they not participating in a phone interview and given more time to respond.

Figure A.1. Partner Organizations' Metrics in Achieving Goals
APPENDIX B

HERITAGE AREA PARTNER SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The first series of questions will help me get a general understanding of how you/your organization functions in the region.

1. What are your organization’s goals/mission in the region?

2. How do you/your organization measure your effectiveness in achieving these goals?

3. What are potential barriers to achieving these goals? (political, economic, external, internal, etc.) What specific factors would increase your organization’s ability to achieve these goals?

The next series of questions will help me learn about your relationship with [the NHA management entity] – how the partnership formed, the nature of the partnership, etc.

4. How long have you/your organization been a partner of [the NHA management entity]? How was the partnership initiated?

5. What were the your/your organization’s motivations for getting involved in the NHA?

6. What were the most important issues you thought needed to be addressed by this type of partnership?

7. Where do you see overlap between the NHA mission and goals and your organization’s mission and goals? In what ways are your mission and goals potentially at odds with that of the NHA?

8. Does the “region” as defined by the NHA reasonably match up with your notion of the “regional economy”?

9. In what ways do you currently work with [the NHA management entity]?

10. Is your organization’s participation in the NHA ongoing or as-needed when issues or specific projects arise?

11. In your view, what role(s) does [the NHA management entity] play in this relationship?
12. Which of the following types of partnership characterizes your involvement with [the NHA management entity]?
   A. Contractual agreement
   B. Memorandum of understanding
   C. Verbal agreement

13. What are the expectations and/or requirements for your organization’s participation in the NHA?

14. What criteria do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of this relationship? What are your expectations for results?

15. What are you/your organization’s reasons for continuing the partnership? Have the results or impacts of the partnership exceeded the resources you/your organization have put into the NHA?

The next series of questions cover how your relationship with [the NHA management entity] has potentially changed or adapted over time.

16. How has the partnership evolved? Has the partnership broadened over time to address a wider set of issues or partnership goals?

17. Has the level of formality, commitment or expectations for participation changed over time?

18. Can you describe an example, if any, of when the partnership adapted, changed or reset its goals in response to changing conditions in the local or regional economy, funding sources or otherwise?

19. Is there a mechanism or plan in place for reevaluating the partnership or resetting goals at regular intervals?

The final series of questions concern how the NHA designation and your partnership with [the
NHA management entity] have potentially impacted your organization’s work or economic development strategies within the region.

20. How, if at all, does the NHA partnership and designation affect the way in which you work? For example, does NHA participation change your/or your organization’s, strategic thinking or long-term planning? Has it changed the way in which you or your organization prioritizes objectives?

A. Creates a shared understanding of opportunities and challenges in the region?

B. Other unintended consequences? By unintended consequences, I am referring to impacts that you didn’t expect, or intend from this relationship. These can be either positive, negative, or neutral

21. Has heritage area participation led to increased collaboration or communication with other local or regional economic development stakeholders?

22. Has heritage area participation led to increased collaboration or communication with historic preservation, conservation or community-based organizations?

23. What could the NHA management entity do to improve this relationship in the future?

24. That covers everything I wanted to ask. What else should I have asked you that I didn’t think to ask?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


