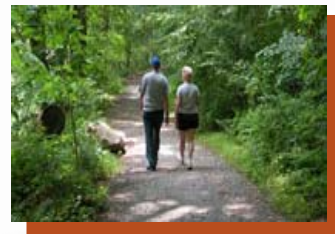


Northern Delaware Heritage Network

This is a place where creek waters flow through rocky landscapes of quiet beauty towards the shores of the Christina and Delaware rivers and the coastal plain. Its proud heritage is being rediscovered and brought to light through the efforts of the Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition.

The Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition — a grass-roots coalition of many interest groups —worked with the National Park Service, New Castle County and Wilmington Area Planning Council for three years to develop plans to integrate heritage stories and form a physical and thematic network of historic and cultural sites and green spaces throughout northern Delaware. This Concept Plan summarizes the Coalition's work; defines the overall heritage integration challenges and opportunities; and proposes the vision and goals for a Northern Delaware Heritage Network and a more vibrant quality of life in northern Delaware.

d r a f t



CONCEPT PLAN

Overview: Proposed Northern Delaware Heritage Network

The Northern Delaware landscape possesses an incredibly rich tapestry of historic, cultural and natural assets. The concentration of so many heritage assets in such a small area of Delaware (20% of the state, or 396 square miles--less than 1/7 the land area of Rhode Island) is noteworthy in the Mid-Atlantic region. The rivers and creeks of the Delaware Piedmont helped “power” industrial development of the State and the Nation. Historic transportation routes by land—along the “fall line” between the Delaware River and the upper Chesapeake Bay—and by river to Philadelphia and abroad helped the First State contribute to the Nation’s settlement and founding.

Hundreds of heritage assets dot the Northern Delaware landscape. Amazingly, their **potential for full access and meaningful use** for heritage tourism and by Delawareans (60% live in the area) is not being fully realized. Many of these significant but physically fragmented sites are not well connected on the ground, cohesively presented or effectively marketed. Our local cultural institutions and world class museums should enjoy more regional patronage, and lesser known cultural sites and activities of more recent vintage should be celebrated to connect to today's audiences. No overarching entity is available to organize and cooperatively support, present and preserve the richness of **all the heritage assets** in Northern Delaware.

The idea for heritage groups to work together for the “greater good” was conceived several years ago. A coalition of interest groups (see back cover for the different type of groups) and dedicated individuals volunteered to examine ways to unlock the full potential of Northern Delaware heritage assets for all to enjoy.



Marshall Family Mansion, Auburn Heights Preserve, Red Clay Valley

In 2006, the **Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition** initiated a study to address issues and examine potential benefits. The Coalition requested assistance from the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, New Castle County Land Use Department, and Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) to develop a concept for an overall, “integrated heritage network” in Northern Delaware. The effort also sought to capitalize on recent national trends towards:

- preservation of scenic byways and trails,
- environmental awareness and the “green” movement,
- healthy living, and
- heritage and eco-tourism.

Primary aims for a Heritage Network are to enhance our access to heritage resources by improving the area’s transportation infrastructure and to coordinate themes for two types of heritage assets: 1) historic and cultural; and 2) natural, scenic and outdoor recreation.





Northern Delaware Heritage Project Area



Head of Christiana Church, White Clay Valley

Potential benefits of such an integrated heritage network are:

- build community awareness and civic pride
- inspire interest in history and culture
- promote and support health, fitness and recreation
- link communities with key destinations across Delaware and the region
- boost local economic development, support tourism and build vibrant communities

A summary of the **Coalition's three-year planning effort** and the proposed **Heritage Network Concept Plan** are covered in this brochure. Details documenting the work by the **50 agencies, institutions, and organizations** and **70 individuals** who participated are located in the Appendices.

Next steps for the Coalition are to:

- formalize an organization and further broaden participation, including that within individual heritage "discovery areas,"
- complete a demonstration project, including an overall map and virtual network, and
- further develop physical & thematic linkages among the network's heritage sites.

This document describes the Concept Plan--that is, a "wish list" of big ideas that the Coalition will eventually distill down into a strategic action plan for the near-term with feasible and fundible ideas. This living document and the Concept Plan will continue to evolve. *The coalition urges you to participate in this ongoing process to collectively promote, preserve and interpret our heritage assets!*



About Northern Delaware's Landscape

Northern Delaware includes about 60% of the state's population within 20% of its land area. The most concentrated and richest variety of resources in the state and possibly the region are located here, from the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal to the Pennsylvania and Maryland borders. Northern Delaware can be divided into five geographic and cultural regions, or heritage areas, that are based largely on watershed boundaries and the Piedmont fall line. The five regions are:

City of Wilmington

Wilmington has been the region's economic and cultural hub from 1638 continuing into the present. Its downtown, neighborhoods, and riverfront offer a rich tapestry of urban experiences where three rivers—the Christina, the Brandywine, and the Delaware—meet.

Brandywine

Here water power was the key to wealth generated by industry and the development of the nation's industrial might. The resulting estates were later converted to an unparalleled and well-known system of public parks and private museums.

Red Clay

Once home to more than 90 water powered mills churning out an astonishing variety of products, now its scenic, tranquil hills and valleys are the focus of conservation efforts by the Red Clay Valley Association, the second oldest small watershed organization in America.

White Clay & Newark

The core of this area is one of the rare unspoiled, intact river systems in the urbanized corridor between Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Newark, Delaware. The White Clay Creek is a National Wild & Scenic River, recognized for its outstanding natural and recreational features. More than 3,384 acres of parkland in Delaware alone surround the City of Newark.

Pencader / Red Lion Areas

The largest of the five heritage areas geographically, Pencader/Red Lion is bounded by I-95 in the north, Chesapeake and Delaware Canal in the south, Maryland to the west and the Delaware River to the east. Unlike the other four regions, Pencader/Red Lion is located largely within the coastal plain. Its northern anchor is the historic City of New Castle, a capitol seat long before William Penn arrived, and its southern anchor is Delaware City, the eastern terminus of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal.

The Unique Qualities of Its Heritage Assets

Northern Delaware contributed to the settlement and founding of the State and the Nation, poised as it is in the middle of the Atlantic seaboard, close to Philadelphia—once the nation's capitol—and mild in climate with fertile soils and an abundance of fresh water. Northern Delaware mills provided the flour that fed the American troops during the Revolution. Later the area's industrial might supported the Union during the Civil War and the nation during the World Wars. The process of shaping industrial America produced a group of wealthy industrialists whose legacy is a unique system of parks and world class museums. This special place is northern Delaware, an area rich in culture, recreational amenities and



natural beauty. Within northern Delaware, each of the five heritage areas encompasses a rich variety of resources that showcase the evolution of its distinctive landscape and connect its residents to their past and present. Public parklands and open space, natural areas and gardens, historic and cultural sites, and historic transportation corridors--including water routes--are all important community resources that are considered heritage assets. Each asset can be linked thematically to other assets to create a complete, comprehensive portrait of northern Delaware.

About the Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition

The Coalition is an informal advisory body made up of representatives from municipalities, non-profits, state agencies and local citizens which formed to guide the planning process for a heritage network. The Northern Delaware Heritage Network isn't a completely new idea. Individual communities, nonprofit groups, and county and state agencies have been working on transportation infrastructure and other pieces of the network for many years. With many successes and new efforts started, the Coalition sees this as the time to bring all these efforts together. The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program was asked to convene these interested groups to determine if there is public and private support for the development of a heritage network throughout northern Delaware. The proposed network will be a creative, cooperative effort relying on the expertise and talents of local residents and groups working through the Coalition.

Primary Challenges for the Coalition

#1: Marketing and Promotion

Northern Delaware is generally under marketed. Create a series of "Discovery Areas" to provide comprehensive information on northern Delaware's heritage assets, and develop a logo and graphic identity to showcase the wide variety of northern Delaware heritage assets.

#2: Access

Promote projects that will eliminate barriers, including perceived and physical, to the pedestrian and bicycling experience. These barriers affect not only access to heritage assets but support for active, healthy lifestyles.

#3: Public Awareness and Education

A strong coalition providing collective tools for each site will be better able to stem the loss of heritage resources, promote good stewardship and conservation, and provide broader interpretation to a much larger number of people.

#4: Public Safety and Health

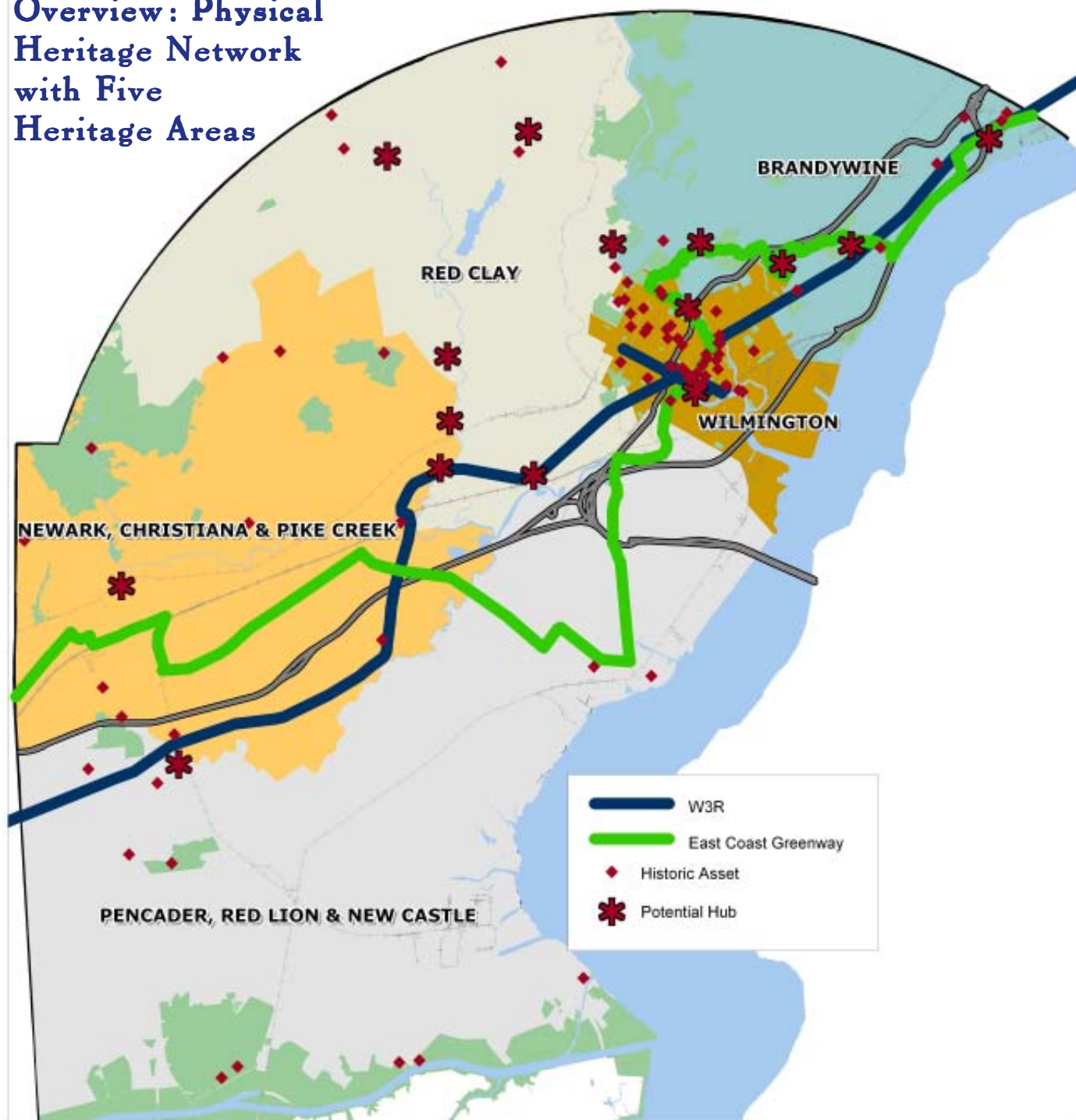
Help reverse the national trend towards sedentary, unhealthy lifestyles by encouraging citizens of northern Delaware to be more active. First, promote the many opportunities to explore the five heritage areas by trails, walking tours, or bikes. Second, advocate the development and promotion of trails that are pleasant, safe and provide access from one heritage area to another.

#5: Regional Connections

Take advantage of opportunities to physically and interpretively connect northern Delaware's heritage assets with the larger region and provide excellent exposure, given there are several national trail and heritage initiatives under way that cross northern Delaware and provide opportunities to connect beyond state borders.



Overview: Physical Heritage Network with Five Heritage Areas



About the Physical Heritage Network

The physical heritage network elements consist of:

- ◆ The heritage assets themselves – major waterways, parks and recreation areas, cultural and historic sites, and educational institutions such as schools and libraries
- ◆ Regional trail spines - East Coast Greenway and Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route
- ◆ New Castle County trail/greenway network from Pathway Plan
- ◆ DelDOT proposed bike routes
- ◆ Trailheads
- ◆ Transit routes and stops
- ◆ Auto tour routes



Vision

The Coalition sees the Northern Delaware Heritage Network as a means to utilize the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R) and the East Coast Greenway (ECG) as the braided spine across New Castle County that directly connects or connects via a spur to each of five “heritage areas.” The network of transit, biking, hiking and driving routes would provide alternative transportation connections among historic sites, parks and cultural assets in northern New Castle County.

Goals

Access

Provide increased mobility for a broad cross-section of the population. Create a comprehensive, consistent and understandable signage and wayfinding system. Emphasize safe, multi-modal access to historic sites and recreational opportunities throughout northern New Castle County.

Marketing

Enhance awareness of and access to heritage resources through coordinated cross-marketing, including virtual information sharing and delivery systems as well as physical media.

Interpretation

Provide a framework and options for incorporating information on heritage initiatives and interrelated stories and themes.

Conservation

Increase community commitment to resource preservation.

Ultimate Benefits

BUILD COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND CIVIC PRIDE

As additional communities and their residents help plan and develop the network, as part of this grassroots effort, pride of ownership develops, creating a new appreciation and understanding of their communities' assets and amenities. This commitment can spark ideas and actions that bring new unity and pride to the community, a will to preserve the assets that make the community special, and improve quality of life for all.

INSPIRE INTEREST IN HISTORY AND CULTURE

It will provide a unique opportunity for current and future generations to learn about and appreciate the rich heritage of northern Delaware. It will be a non-traditional classroom, with heritage assets linked together thematically and enriched by interpretive areas for use by schools and the general public.

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT HEALTH, FITNESS, AND RECREATION

Inviting pathways will encourage residents and visitors to participate in healthy exercise and fitness activities. Alternative transportation choices will create more cohesive communities, conserve gasoline, and reduce pollution. The network will create more opportunities for recreation and will link parks and facilities.

BOOST LOCAL ECONOMIES AND SUPPORT TOURISM

All of northern Delaware's communities can participate in the significant economic benefits of heritage tourism supported by a well integrated transportation network and organized, coordinated marketing and promotion. Heritage network users provide a market for food and beverages, lodging, equipment, bicycle sales/rental/repair, clothing, accessories, books, maps, and guides.



Trails at Brandywine Creek State Park near Wilmington

LINK COMMUNITIES WITH THE ASSETS THAT SURROUND THEM

Residents can build on existing plans such as the New Castle County Greenways Plan and WILMAPCO Pathway Plan to provide more travel choices. They can identify short trips between communities and their heritage assets, tying them together socially and economically using safe routes for cyclists, wheelchair users and families with strollers. They can connect to the larger region through long-distance trails such as the East Coast Greenway and Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route.



The Concept Plan

The idea for the proposed Northern Delaware Heritage Network is based on a simple premise: reconnect residents and introduce newcomers to northern Delaware's creeks and rivers, parks, cultural and historic sites, and natural assets through a complete, coordinated system of trails, transit, cycling and auto routes. Promote these heritage assets through integrated and organized marketing and communications. Package these heritage resources in a way that enhances their collective value.

This Concept Plan for an integrated heritage network represents the culmination of a three-year community planning effort of the Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition, supported by New Castle County Land Use Department and Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO), and assisted by East Coast Greenway Delaware and the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program.



Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition meeting, February 2006

The first year was devoted to vision and goal setting, and the second year to development of draft text for a demonstration project that consisted of a fold-out map/brochure describing five auto loop tours through the heritage areas of northern Delaware. These first steps were designed to help promote northern Delaware's heritage assets. During the second and third years, a series of workshops was conducted in each heritage area with community representatives to identify heritage assets; challenges and opportunities related to accessing those assets by public transit, foot or bike; and options for access now available or under development. Additional workshops with the Coalition yielded information on the themes represented by heritage assets and potential information and transportation hubs within each heritage area.

WILMAPCO incorporated the workshop results into a matrix of priority transportation, historic preservation and community development projects to guide future project implementation discussions with the Coalition. WILMAPCO also developed the approach to organizing information on heritage assets through a series of "discovery areas." For a description of meetings, workshops and other elements of the public engagement process, see Appendix VII.

Going forward, the draft Concept Plan is to be further developed by all heritage groups and their partners with projects and programs to achieve the long-term vision, goals and ultimate benefits of the Heritage Network.



I. Exploring Northern Delaware and Improving the Heritage Experience

Many of our region's assets are accessible by walking, cycling or public transit, but many others are accessible only by driving. As this plan promotes travel choices for exploring the region, the planning process examined recommendations contained in both the New Castle County Pathway Plan and Delaware Greenways Plan as well as DELDOT's Bicycle Plan. While exploring the area by bicycle is very desirable, the reality is that most bike routes are only currently useable by experienced road cyclists. Many key opportunities to increase exploration by bicycle rely on the pathway and greenway plan. These types of projects are listed separately within the matrix of priority projects in Appendix III.

The Coalition identified a range of priority infrastructure projects related to improving access and enhancing the experience at heritage assets. It was determined that improving access calls for a comprehensive, consistent and understandable signage and wayfinding system. In addition, the Coalition identified infrastructure and programs that relate to historic preservation, conservation, interpretation, and community development. The projects include design of trailheads and information kiosks or materials, development of downtown walking tours, inventories of historic resources, theme development, preservation and adaptation of historic structures, hometown overlays and mixed use developments, as well as open space preservation and park improvements. These types of projects are listed separately within the matrix of priority projects in Appendix III.



Eastburn Jeanes Mining Complex, Pike Creek, White Clay Valley

The Coalition adopted the "Discovery Areas" concept to help organize the heritage experience. Discovery areas are clusters of sites within each of five heritage areas that could serve as potential information "hubs" for both the heritage area and the larger Northern Delaware Heritage Network. Themes are tentatively suggested for each discovery area, and connections among sites are encouraged through existing public transit and the bicycle and pedestrian network. DART buses and SEPTA rail already provide service to many heritage sites. Opportunities exist to provide more information at DART bus stops about the heritage resources in the surrounding area. Train stations provide ideal hubs for information about the overall network. Future plans for improvements to bike and pedestrian access are described. Available parking facilities are also noted. The discovery areas and a physical assessment of amenities at each heritage site can be found in the matrix of Discovery Areas in Appendix IV.



II. Creating a Graphic Identity and Promoting the Heritage Assets

The Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition assessed the challenges relating to “branding”—that is, creating an identity for a product that is positive and quickly recognized by a broad population. The lack of a consistent identity for the wide variety of resources included in the Northern Delaware Heritage Network makes it difficult for people to recognize the project and be aware of the sites, how they are related, and how they can be accessed. The primary challenge for the Coalition is to find ways to get visitors to and through the different heritage areas, and identify the types of information that would be needed within each heritage area. In lieu of a kiosk or interpretive signs at each site, a template (virtual or physical) with a logo and information about the Heritage Network could be developed. The Coalition agreed that the first step was to create a logo that would be used on all Coalition products and could be

available for incorporation into individual heritage asset signs, programs or promotion activities. The logo should be easy to identify at different travel speeds.

The Coalition also agreed on the necessity to support the lesser known sites in particular and enhance awareness of heritage resources in general. The Coalition’s first step in coordinated cross-marketing is the northern Delaware auto loop tour brochure and map. A companion web site will begin to address virtual information sharing and delivery systems. These products begin to provide a framework and options for incorporating information on heritage initiatives and interrelated stories and themes. A list of suggested projects for the future can be found in Appendix III.



Trailhead, Northern Delaware Greenway at Bellevue State Park, north of Wilmington



Proposed Actions

The Physical Heritage Network

To complete the physical network the following actions need to be taken:

Complete the East Coast Greenway

The East Coast Greenway Plan for Delaware was completed in 2003. Many sections of Delaware's 38 miles, including the Northern Delaware Greenway, City of New Castle's Battery Park, Wilmington Riverwalk, and the Newark Hall Trail, have been completed. The 3,000-mile-long trail through 15 states and DC provides tremendous opportunities to develop interpretive information that links Delaware to the region and leverages the resources of the East Coast Greenway Alliance. Additionally, 26 miles of the historic Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route partially overlap with the East Coast Greenway in Delaware, providing additional opportunities for interpretation and historic preservation. Gaps in the East Coast greenway route remain, including connections from Pennsylvania through Claymont to Bellevue State Park, the connection from the Wilmington Riverwalk to Old New Castle, and the link between New Castle and Churchman's Crossing. The Coalition views completing these gaps as a priority.

Implement the New Castle County Pathway Plan

The New Castle County Pedestrian and Bicycle Pathway Plan was completed in 2007. The plan proposes a combination of on and off road pathways, including bicycle and pedestrian paths separated from motorized traffic by a curb, barrier or

open space; and greenway trails—that is, trails for foot or bike traffic within linear natural corridors. The plan will mainly be implemented through coordinated multimodal transportation projects and new development. Other recommended pathways can be completed using state or federal transportation funding. The Coalition assessment indicates which elements of the plan are priority projects. Information about potential funding sources is included in Appendix V.

Encourage improvements to designated bike routes

DelDOT completed the Delaware Bicycle Facility Master Plan in 2007. This study defines a statewide system of designated—and primarily on-road—bicycle routes, many of which provide access to heritage areas; however, many of these routes are only useable by highly skilled cyclists, leaving the majority of the community without appropriate cycling routes.



Potential rail-trail to New Castle





Little Italy, City of Wilmington

· Implement Corridor Management Plans that integrate trails and public transit

Three Scenic Byways have been designated within the planning area, including the Brandywine Valley National Scenic Byway; and Red Clay Valley and Route 9, designated as State Scenic Byways. A requirement for scenic byway designations is the development of corridor management plans for the route that identify transportation, interpretive and preservation needs. The Scenic Byways represent many miles and communities and multiple roadways, and therefore are an excellent way to get a quick overview of northern Delaware heritage areas by motor vehicle. In addition, exploring these areas at a more leisurely pace by bike could be encouraged.

· Develop a program to promote our historic highways

The Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route follows three of our oldest highways. It is these historic highways that string together so many of our historic assets, actually the majority of those assets. These roads lack many of the characteristics that typify a “Scenic Byway” and therefore are unlikely to receive state or federal designation under such a program. Nonetheless, the roads include valued resources that the community seeks to preserve and enhance. A different approach will be required for their development and management, perhaps an alternative form of recognition and/or designation for the route that includes a plan for interpretation of assets and a re-greening program.



The Thematic Heritage Network

To integrate the heritage assets and organize the heritage experience, the following actions need to be taken:

Identify interpretive themes represented by the heritage assets and develop theme-based tour options and materials

Themes are storylines that can link northern Delaware's heritage sites and provide context for understanding our past, present and future. The stories communicate the most important aspects of the site to the public, answering questions about who, what, where, how and why. Themes connect to the audience on a universal level and provide a variety of perspectives. Some thirteen potential theme categories have been identified for northern Delaware heritage sites that could be developed into detailed storylines and provide a framework for interpretative programs and materials at the sites, on the internet, and working with local school curricula.

The theme categories are described in more detail in Appendix VI. They were developed preliminarily and could change.

The themes identified are:

- ◆ ECOLOGY & CONSERVATION*
- ◆ INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT / WATER POWER*
- ◆ MILITARY HISTORY*
- ◆ UNDERGROUND RAILROAD*
- ◆ FOUNDING OF A NATION
- ◆ RELIGION
- ◆ CULTURAL DIVERSITY
- ◆ TRANSPORTATION

- ◆ HORTICULTURE & AGRICULTURE
- ◆ SCHOOLS of ART
- ◆ ARCHITECTURE & LANDSCAPE
- ◆ ARCHITECTURE
- ◆ EDUCATION

The first four theme categories that are asterisked stand out as being represented through the current initiatives of the Brandywine Heritage Partnership, the Delaware National Coastal Resources Study, and the Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition. Geography, climate and topography provide the overarching context for all the themes.

Many heritage sites included within the Discovery Areas represent multiple themes. Identifying the variety of themes that are found at each heritage site is a primary goal. Providing information on each theme as it relates to the individual site and to the other relevant sites within northern Delaware is another goal.

◆ Integrate Information Hubs and thematic materials into the physical network

Additional Discovery Areas would be considered where there is an intersection of several physical network elements. The more physical elements that intersect at a location, the higher its priority for development as part of an organized heritage experience. If the intersection occurs where no heritage site exists, a separate information "hub" could be created. Information hubs would not necessarily be physically located on the ground-- "virtual" hubs using digital technology could supply information on the heritage areas and facilities associated with heritage assets.



Pulling It All Together: The Future

Although there are many supporters for the proposed Northern Delaware Heritage Network, the Coalition will continue to meet with community members, heritage groups, and representatives from municipalities, WILMAPCO, New Castle County, and Delaware state agencies to discuss alternative transportation routes and ideas for connecting heritage assets. This same group using a grass-roots approach will be asked to guide the tasks the Coalition agrees to focus on.

The first order of business is to formalize the Coalition and form partnerships with business and corporations, tourism interests, schools and educational institutions, health care/wellness interests, and civic organizations. The Coalition members have also agreed to:

- Create a standard visual identity for the Heritage Network that includes the project web site, logo, and other materials.
- Develop guidelines for sites that would like to be part of the Heritage Network Discovery Areas.
- Broaden accessibility to the marketing materials created by the Coalition with translations into additional languages and appropriate internet access for the visually/auditorally challenged.
- Provide input to WILMAPCO on priority trail and transit projects on a regular basis. These priority projects would be included in WILMAPCO's workplan when funding becomes available.

Share Our Vision

The Northern Delaware Heritage Network will provide excellent opportunities to link communities, boost local economies, encourage alternative modes of transportation, support environmental and history education and re-connect people to their heritage as well as current cultural activities. Forging new partnerships with public and private interests is the only way to make the Heritage Network a reality and connect yesterday to today. The most effective way for groups to become involved is by joining the Coalition, advocating the idea to their local officials, and informing their neighbors and other organizations about the project.

Please support us!



Christina Riverfront, City of Wilmington



Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition

Communities across New Castle County; non-profit conservation, trails and transportation groups; heritage interests; educational institutions; tourism organizations; and state and local government agencies make up the Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition and participated in the development of the concept plan.

You can find out more about the Northern Delaware Heritage Network, the Northern Delaware Heritage Coalition, and how to assist the project, at:

Wilmington Area Planning Council's web site

www.wilmapco.org/NDHC/

OR

[\[project web site\]](#)

For additional information about this project, please contact:

New Castle County Land Use Department, 87 Reads Way,
New Castle DE 19720 at 302.395.5451

OR

the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program,
US Custom House, 200 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106 at 215.597.6473

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