

Program unveiled

Program promotes local historical sites through interaction.

By EUGENE PAIK, Daily Record/Sunday News

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For a new York County tourism plan, historical markers aren't enough.

The York County Heritage Program will "tell a story" to visitors who want a glimpse of the county's history, an official from the Lancaster-York Heritage Region said Tuesday.

"It's intended to ensure that once a site is included, it meets a level of authenticity and quality," organization president Mark Platts said.

The program is part of a new look for the nonprofit preservation advocacy group's heritage tourism efforts. The group also detailed a revamped version of a similar program in Lancaster County Tuesday.

The Lancaster County program was created in 1994 as a way of designating areas as authentic historical sites or events. Efforts to create a partner program in York County took off in 2004, according to the Lancaster-York Heritage Region.

It provides a marketing boost for participants, who will be packaged together in promotional materials, Platts said.

Not all local sites are eligible for the program, he said. They must be reviewed by an advisory board and be approved by the county planning commission.

"We present the story in an authentic way, so it's not just all marketing," Platts said.

The sites are vetted based on criteria such as their architecture, the amount of historic features they have, their association with historic events and their ability to accommodate visitors.

Funding comes from a state grant, totaling about \$50,000, awarded to the Lancaster-York Heritage Region several years ago.

A different focus

The plan is a little different from the typical historical tourism program because it pays close attention to details, said York County Planning Commission Director Felicia Dell.

For instance, she said, a historic restaurant would be showcased by focusing on the experience of dining at the establishment.

"Have the owners always maintained ownership? Are some entrees unique to the restaurant?" she said. "It's not just the plain, old, dry historical material. It's more interactive."

SITES

The York Heritage Program kicks off at three sites:

- The York County Heritage Trust's Colonial Complex on West Market Street in York. The complex includes the Colonial Courthouse, Gen. Horatio Gates House, Golden Plough Tavern and Barnett Bobb Log House.
- Richard M. Nixon County Park and Nature Center in Springfield Township.
- The Old Line Museum in Delta.

The sites were officially designated at the Feb. 5 meeting of the York County Planning Commission. More than 80 sites could be included in the program, said Mark Platts, president of the Lancaster-York Heritage Region.