

CHAPTER 7
MANAGEMENT
STRATEGY

THAMES MARITIME HERITAGE PARK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN. Prepared by QL CONSULTING, INC. and The Office of Thomas J. Martin 1994.

Chapter Review

In this chapter, we recommend an organizational structure for Park operations, as well as for its policy-level governance. We first suggest the components of the management strategy. An overview of the current management environment is then presented. We outline an appropriate staffing pattern, volunteer requirements, the role of a local policy-level board, and the relationship of the local elements of the Heritage Park to the State Parks Department. Such strategies will assure that local stewardship of the Park is directly tied to its operational directions.

Components of the Management Strategy

The following components should be part of the management strategy:

Source Documents. These are the formative materials that provide the conceptual, legal and policy-level underpinnings of the Heritage Park. Source documents include the founding legislation, organizational/business plans, mission and goals statements, and articles of incorporation/by-laws for any corporate governing entity that is established.

Organizational Options. The Heritage Park must ultimately have some type of formal organizational structure. It can be a public entity formed by intermunicipal- interagency agreements, a private nonprofit corporation, or a public/private partnership commission.

Key Players. Heritage Park management must include a host of key "stakeholders" (i.e. organizations, agencies and individuals who have a vested interest in the park), including:

- several state agencies (parks, tourism, economic development, transportation, arts and historical commissions, etc.),
- the participating historical sites,
- municipalities and their agencies,
- private business and civic leaders,
- tourism interests (attractions, marketing, hospitality, etc.), and
- educational community (administrators, parents, teachers, students, etc.).

Components of the Management Strategy (continued)

Resolution of naturally conflicting interests. Because of the diverse interests that intersect with the heritage park, its management structure must accommodate a number of potentially conflicting interests:

State - Local

Tourism Development - Heritage Development

One Municipality - Another Municipality

Business and Industry Interests - Civic Development Interests

Staff and Administration. The Heritage Park has many operational components that will require careful administrative attention, from basic operational management of the visitor center facility, to issues of community education, public services, events management, board development, and fund raising. It is a complex array of disparate functions that must be thoughtfully, thoroughly, and comprehensively administered.

Volunteer Capacity. The Heritage Park will not be able to operate without volunteers -- for basic operations as well as auxiliary and ancillary functions. A "Friends of the Heritage Park" will be needed as a support system. The resources for this effort could come from individuals who step forward as volunteers, or from collaborative effort of existing historical/volunteer resources. If the National Park Service becomes involved, the Eastern Parks and Monuments Association provides certain volunteer and professional resources for management of gift shops.

Current Management Environment

The current environment of Park Management is distinguished by the following characteristics:

Operational Guidelines. The State Legislation that created the Heritage Park is the only source to provide direction for the management of the park. The legislation is extremely general and provides no explicit guidelines. In short, the guidelines must be created.

Governance. The stewardship of the park is vested in several sources, depending on the issue at hand.

State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) plays the primary role in monitoring overall Park development and being responsible for management of park facilities.

State of Connecticut Department of Public Works is responsible for overseeing construction of the Visitor Center.

Heritage Park Advisory Board is mandated by legislation to represent the interests of the municipalities; to review plans for park development; and to recommend designated sites for inclusion in the Park.

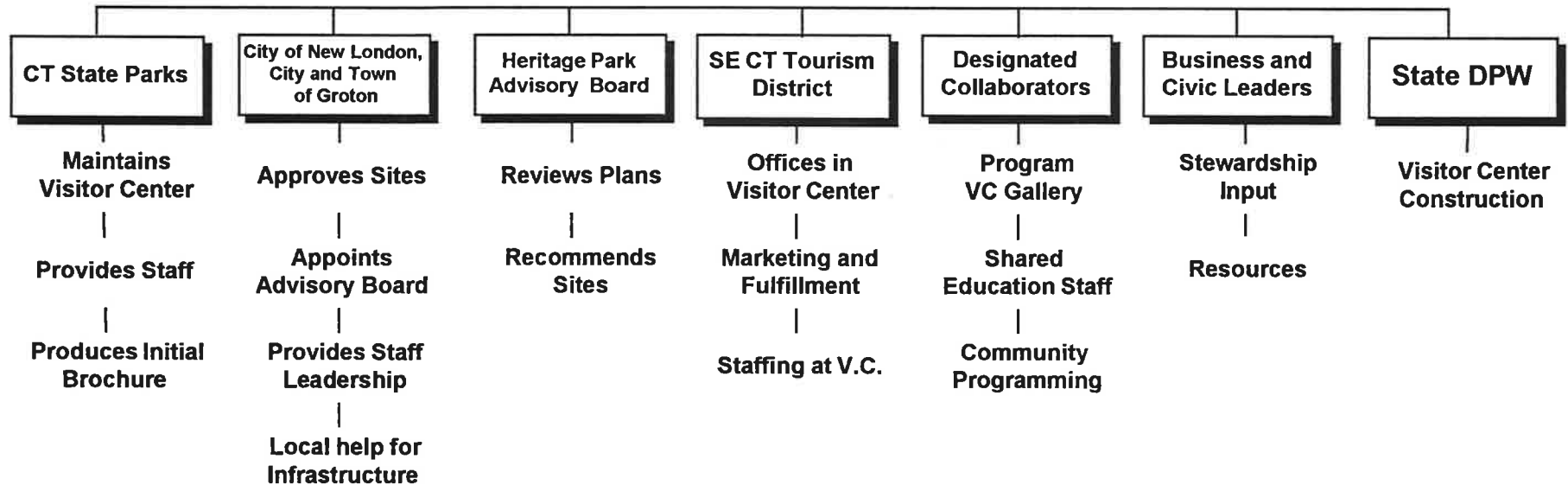
Current Management Environment (continued)

Staffing. During development and for operations of the visitor center, the Connecticut Department of Parks, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation will provide day-to-day staffing for the Heritage Park. The Planning/Development Departments of the participating municipalities (City of New London and the City and Town of Groton) are also involved at the staff level to assist in resolving local issues. There are currently no operations and thus, no operational staff is required at this time.

Volunteers / Unpaid Staff. The Heritage Park Advisory Board and its several committees are currently playing the role of volunteers/unpaid staff in development of the park. However, this role is advisory and is not implementational at this time. The Technical Advisor to the Advisory Board is a volunteer position currently held by the director of the New London County Historical Society.

Current Players and Their Potential Roles

The chart below shows the multiplicity of players in the development and future management/governance of the heritage park.



Management Strategy

We recommend the following actions to implement a management strategy for the Thames Maritime Heritage Park:

Visitor Center Design and Construction. The heritage park is in need of a tangible "result" that would get the community enthusiastic about the project. There is no better place to start producing results than with the design, construction, and grand opening of the Visitor Center.

Visitor Center Operations. The initial operating agency for the Heritage Park will only deal with the Visitor Center, and this is clearly the immediate responsibility of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Bureau of State Parks. State Parks should assume a large initial role in the operations of the Visitor Center and, later on, work with the Tourism District and a locally-based "Friends of..." group to help staff and program the center and its community programs. Initial staff should be hired after ground-breaking for the facility. If possible, an existing site should be identified to serve as an interim office and Visitor Center prior to the grand opening of the new facility.

Management Strategy (continued)

Short Term Governance. In the immediate term, the Advisory Board should work with the Southeastern Connecticut Tourism District (SECTD will be the primary tenant in the visitor center) provide initial supplemental staff/volunteer support that may be needed to complement personnel provided by DEP.

Long Term Governance. In the long run, the heritage park will be governed and operated by an entity that brings all stakeholders into the management equation. Efforts should begin immediately to create the "*Thames Heritage Partnership Commission*" (see next page for complete description). A long term organizational plan should be prepared to establish a formal mission statement for the Park, and define the role and responsibilities, representation and composition of its governing body. As soon as possible, local leadership behind current heritage park activity (i.e. the City of New London, the City and Town of Groton, and State Parks should begin the process of

- ◆ defining the new commission,
- ◆ advocating for the state legislation required to formally create and authorize it, and
- ◆ recruiting local leaders to participate actively as members in it.

The next page outlines the general nature of the proposed Thames Heritage Partnership Commission.

Thames Heritage Partnership Commission

The Thames Heritage Partnership Commission would be a new entity to steward the Heritage Park components. Specifically, the Commission would address operational and policy-level issues that cut across different functional areas (i.e. no other single entity can handle the given issue otherwise). These issues include:

Establishing guidelines for, and monitoring community uses of the Visitor Center

Programming the Showcase Gallery

Organizing cultural/educational collaborations

Determining and evaluating community events/activities relating to Visitor Center and Sites
Signage, markers, trails, maps, etc.

Approving and monitoring arrangements with outside concessionaires

Designating "collaborators" and "affiliates" (see Collaborations Strategy)

Marketing the Park (see Tourism Promotion and Marketing Strategy)

Developing the Transportation System (see Transportation Strategy)

The Commission would also be the vehicle to spearhead the advocacy effort to create a National Heritage Area (see Chapter 11)