

Currents

The newsletter of the Four Rivers Heritage Area

ANNAPOLIS

LONDON TOWN

SOUTH COUNTY

Rebranding Project Kicks Off

This summer, Four Rivers continued the work that started with the Boundary Expansion, by initiating work to Rebrand our heritage area with a new name that will better represent our larger area and new themes and partners. Funding for the project has been secured from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) through a FY2022 Marketing Grant. The work is being undertaken by a Four Rivers Rebranding Subcommittee made up of key members of the Board of Directors under the leadership of Chair, Tim Leahy and staffed by Executive Director, Carol Benson. With the Subcommittee's guidance, Benson developed and issued an RFP for a Marketing agency to lead the process. A careful review of the six proposals received resulted in the selection of The Cyphers Agency as the best "fit" for Four Rivers' vision for the project, which has four phases: Name, Logo, and Brand development; multimedia strategy development; final Brand strategy and guidelines; and a website update. All work is expected to be completed by June, 2022.

After a contract was signed in late August, the project officially kicked off in earnest with a Zoom meeting (pictured) of key team members that outlined the activities for the first phase of the project, which will result in the determination of a new name for the heritage area.

The activities of this phase include:

- Research and background development by the Cyphers Agency
- Brainstorming session with interested stakeholders
- Development of a Creative Brief
- Short list of name alternatives
- Review and selection of final name

This phase is projected to be completed in early January.



The Brainstorming session listed above has been scheduled for Wednesday, September 29th, via Zoom, and all interested stakeholders are invited to participate. The meeting is planned to be lively and highly interactive. It will be a pivotal part of the process, and we hope to include a wide variety of viewpoints. Spaces are limited and reservations are required, so please contact our office to participate. Following the Brainstorming session, the team members from Cyphers will prepare a Creative Brief. This is a document in which the strategy of the project is clearly recorded in writing, including the project's purpose, goals, requirements, messaging, demographics, and other elements achieved by consensus, which become the rubric for our work. We look forward to sharing additional updates as the project progresses.

What's inside:

page 2

20th Anniversary

page 3

MHAA Grants Awarded

page 4

Getting to Know New Partners



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STAFF

Carol Benson
Ph.D. Executive Director
Jody Christian
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Four Rivers Celebrates 20 Years

In October, our organization celebrates a major milestone – twenty years since certification as one of Maryland's heritage areas!

Our heritage area was launched with the name "Annapolis, London Town & South County Heritage Area," or ALTSCHA, Inc., when it was first proposed and recognized by the state's newly-established Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA), and then finally certified as one of Maryland's heritage areas in October, 2001. Three years later, after work with a consultant on an interpretive plan, the name "Four Rivers: The Heritage Area of Annapolis, London Town & South County" (later Four Rivers Heritage Area for short) was adopted as the organization's marketing identity. The rationale for the choice "Four Rivers" stated in part: "These two words describe both the environment fashioned by the Severn, South, Rhode, and West Rivers, and the cultural landscape that has been created over the centuries. These four rivers have fostered direct connections to the Chesapeake Bay, the region, the nation, and the world. The people who settled here and the history that has played out along its shores are all an essential part of our understanding of the rich heritage encompassed by the name four rivers and the area it represents." Now, as our boundaries have greatly expanded, we seek a new name (see front page).

Karen Engelke was the organization's first Executive Director, followed by Donna Dudley. The current Executive Director, Carol Benson, took the post in 2008. In the early years as the organization grew, it offered ambitious new programs to foster heritage-related organizations and businesses within its boundaries, including the first Mini-Grants program to be administered by a Maryland heritage area, and the first Heritage Awards program (both established under Dudley). Today, most of the heritage areas around the state have followed suit. Now we look back on collaborative programs such as the Mary-

20 YEARS



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land Day Celebration (2022 will be the 15th year), and collaborative committees, workshops, marketing initiatives, and working groups, all of which have helped us meet our mission, "to advance, support and promote the natural, historic and cultural resources of the region."

One of the most important activities of any heritage area is support of projects through grant funding. Every grant has been matched at least dollar-for-dollar, with some projects leveraging far more. Since certification, ALTSCHA has brought more than \$6.5 million in matched grants for projects totaling more than \$22 million. Please plan to join in the celebration of our 20th Anniversary at our annual Heritage Awards event, coming up on November 4.

SAVE THE DATES
- March 25-27, 2022 -



Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Awards Funding Totaling \$414,039 to Local Projects

In July, the Four Rivers Heritage Area joined the Hogan Administration in announcing ten new grants totaling \$414,039 to local Annapolis and Anne Arundel County non-profit organizations by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA), for projects totaling \$986,295. The ten local grants are among 116 matching grants totaling \$5.03 million awarded to Maryland nonprofits, local jurisdictions, and other heritage tourism organizations. These grant funds support heritage tourism projects and activities that draw visitors and expand economic development and tourism-related job creation throughout Maryland.

Seven of the grants support heritage-related projects. Grantees in the Four Rivers Heritage Area include:

- **Annapolis Community Foundation**, in partnership with **Annapolis Greek Heritage Limited**, received a non-capital grant for a project entitled, "Annapolis Greek Heritage Project," \$7,500. The project will preserve the story of Greek immigration to Annapolis by documenting and providing historical information about the original Greek immigrants to Annapolis from 1890 to 1960. These early Greek immigrants developed a community that provided a significant segment of the heart of Annapolis's commerce and cultural diversity and played an important role in the economic, cultural, political, and social development of Annapolis.
- **Annapolis Maritime Museum, Inc.**, received a capital grant for "Lighting the Park – A Public Safety and Accessibility Project," \$95,000. The project will complete the design and installation of a park-wide lighting package and waterside walkway for its Park Campus located at the Ellen O. Moyer Nature Park, increasing public safety and promoting accessibility for the nearly 40,000 visitors that enjoy this park each year.
- **Chesapeake Arts Center, Inc.**, received a capital grant for "Expanded Gallery Space and Exhibitions Program at Chesapeake Arts Center," \$62,750. The project will expand gallery space and increase exhibit programming to benefit regional residents through increased arts and cultural experiences, efforts which are part of CAC's strategic plan to engage community members, students, tourists, and the arts community and to attract them to visit North County.
- **Galesville Community Center, Inc.**, received a non-capital grant entitled, "Persistence, Purpose and Preservation: Rosenwald Schools in Anne Arundel County," \$49,500. This project will highlight the African American school community in Galesville and other Rosenwald school communities in Anne Arundel County. The project's outcomes, including a documentary, will present a positive and empowering narrative about the development of education in segregated communities in our county.
- **Galesville Heritage Society, Inc.**, received a non-capital grant for "GHS Replacement and Acquisition of Outdoor Interpretive Panels," \$8,524. The project will promote Galesville history through outdoor interpretive panels, replacing six deteriorating panels and designing and installing six new panels that promote South County's regional identity in the areas of maritime, farming and tobacco, oystering, and African American and Native American history.
- **London Town Foundation, Inc.**, received a non-capital grant entitled, "Enhancing the Visitor Experience in the Gardens," \$15,765. The project



will enhance the self-directed visitor experience in the gardens at Historic London Town and Gardens by developing 15 interpretive signs across the gardens and providing 500 plants with identification signage. Improving the gardens' signage will provide visitors with more information about the site's remarkable horticulture.

- **Smithsonian Environmental Research Center** received a non-capital grant for "Woodlawn Heritage Trail Planning and Design," \$25,000. The project will plan and design a trail connecting historic sites surrounding its Woodlawn building with its newly-designed interior history exhibit. The trail will feature a focus on the stories of people who lived here and aspects of local history that have previously been unknown to the general public. Planned sites on the trail include the exterior of the 1735 and 1841 plantation house, areas overlooking the fields and the site of a summer kitchen where the enslaved would have toiled, a potential site of a slave cemetery, an archeological site of a tenant farmer home, and more.

In addition, Four Rivers received three grants to support its work. These include: a Management Grant (\$100,000), a Block Grant to fund its Mini-Grant Program (\$25,000), and a Marketing Grant, which supports the Rebranding Project (*see front page*).

Four Rivers Launches “Getting to Know You Year”

Following the Boundary Expansion that was officially approved in April, Four Rivers staff plans a “Getting to Know You” process this fiscal year, to visit, learn about, and support our newest partners by exploring their offerings and briefing our new colleagues on the opportunities and collaborative programs that are available in our heritage area. Some sites were already well-known to the staff and the Boundary Amendment committee, having participated in past Four Rivers meetings and discussions, but others have been closed during the pandemic or are only welcoming visitors for special meetings and events.

Some visits to sites under consideration took place last fall, including North County communities, County regional parks, and the Annapolis Waterworks Park; these were all outdoor visits, as buildings were generally closed to the public. In February, Coordinating Council member Janice Hayes-Williams made special arrangements for a Four Rivers group to visit the Crownsville Cemetery. Several new partner sites were open this past March as part of the Maryland Day Celebration events; these include Jug Bay Sanctuary, Bacon Ridge Natural Area, and Hancock’s Resolution. Beginning in July of this year, Executive Director Carol Benson began to arrange visits to additional newly-added partner sites as part of Four Rivers’ efforts to get to know as many new partners this year as possible.

Pictured here are some of the heritage attractions that Benson visited recently, which are new to the heritage area. In addition, Benson has conducted several orientation meetings via Zoom with colleagues about potential projects. Let us know if we can schedule a visit to your site; we are looking forward to it!



National Electronics Museum in Linthicum Heights



Linthicum Walks in Gambrills



Chesapeake Arts Center in Brooklyn Park



Odenton Historical Society in Gambrills

Please remember the **Four Rivers Heritage Area** (legal name ALTSCHA, Inc.) in your charitable donations. Visit our website, www.fourriversheritage.org/support for details on how you can support the organization.



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Four Rivers is a 501 (c) 3, charitable non-profit organization. Your contribution supports the heritage sites and organizations that make a difference to our region’s quality of life.

