Over time, relationships between people and the land have fostered traditions that are still being passed from generation to generation. The stories told here are as much a part of the county's identity as any physical reminder of the past. Lancaster County Heritage celebrates this legacy by highlighting resources that give the county its unique sense of place.

What is heritage tourism?

In a time when much of the world looks the same, people are looking for unique destinations like Lancaster County — places that take pride in their heritage and are eager to share it with visitors. That’s the idea behind heritage tourism. By raising awareness of authentic local resources, heritage tourism builds community pride and encourages investment in preservation.

Why is it a good fit for Lancaster County?

Heritage resources play a key role in defining Lancaster County, and county residents have consistently called for their preservation. They’ve also expressed concern that the county is losing its uniqueness, a change that could threaten the local tourism industry, economy, and quality of life.

In response, the Lancaster County Planning Commission (LCPC) works with local residents to develop visions, policies, and initiatives to make the county a better place to live, learn, work, and play. Lancaster County Heritage is an important part of that strategy.
The hallmark of the Lancaster County Heritage program is its commitment to authenticity – its pledge to tell the “real” story about the resources that make the county unique.

Heritage Resources

The program features several categories of resources:

- **Heritage Sites** Places that focus on educating residents and visitors about local heritage
- **Historic Places** Museums, Learning Centers, Natural Areas

- **Heritage Services** Businesses that provide an experience linked to local heritage
- **Heritage Events** Activities that educate residents and visitors about local heritage
- **Heritage Tours** Guided or self-guided interpretive experiences focused on local heritage

- **Heritage Products** Handcrafted folk and decorative arts that reflect local heritage
- **Living Treasures** Recognized masters of a traditional skill used to make Heritage Products

- **Heritage Communities** Towns that follow best practices for preservation and heritage tourism
- **Heritage Landscapes** Areas with distinctive features that exemplify local heritage

What are the criteria for designation?

**Authenticity**

Showing a direct link to the heritage of Lancaster County

**Interpretation**

Explaining the significance of that heritage to the public

**Visitor Readiness**

Having high standards of appearance and operation

Each resource type also has additional criteria of its own.

What’s the process?

Applicants follow a 5-step process that begins with an application to Lancaster County Planning Commission staff and continues with Eligibility Committee review and a recommendation from the Advisory Council. Successful applicants are officially designated by the Lancaster County Planning Commission.

What are the benefits?

**Marketing and Promotion**

- Use of the “Authentic Lancaster County, PA” certification seal
- Inclusion in promotional books, brochures, and guides
- Full-page Web site listing
- Special events that highlight Heritage Resources

**Technical Assistance**

- Planning and preservation assistance from LCPC staff
- Help with interpretation – “telling the story” of your resource
- Continuing education seminars

Where can I learn more?

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