

CIVIC TOURISM 2

Creating and Marketing your Somewhere

Conference Report

Blackstone Valley, Rhode Island, USA

October 15-18, 2008

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3-5

1. Foundation: What is Civic Tourism?

1.1	Dan Shilling Definition	5
1.2	Planners of Civic Tourism II Definition.....	5-6
1.3	Macro Conditions Impacting Tourism	6
1.4	Workshops on October 15, 2008	6-7
1.5	"Traveling Home," Keynote address by Scott Russell Sanders	8-18

2. Learning from Each Other in a Learning Community

2.1	Round Table on Future Planning of Civic Places.....	19-20
2.2	Conversations at Lunch	21-22
2.3	Workshops	22-23

3. Civic Labs: Experiencing our Places in Action

3.1	Lab Overview	24
3.2	Outputs from a Lab.....	24-25
3.3	How the Lab Experience Unfolds.....	25-27
3.4	Lab Profiles	27
a.	Cape Cod: The Cranberry Heritage Area.....	27-29
b.	Mystic: A Sustainable Village.....	30-32
c.	Newport: New Development Options for a Historic Destination	32-34
d.	Providence: Growing the City without Losing its Soul & Character	34-37
e.	Westerly: Getting Locals to Become Visitors	37-41

4. Taking Action for Creating Civic Places

4.1	<i>The Summer Day</i> , a Poem by Mary Oliver.....	42
4.2	Laboratory Learning Cafes	42
a.	What did we learn?	42-43
b.	What do we want to learn next?	43
c.	Definitions & Roles	43-44
d.	What we want to create.....	44
4.3	Learning Café on overall conference.....	44
a.	What did we learn?	44-46
b.	What do we want to learn next?	46
c.	In what ways have we better defined Civic Tourism?	47
4.4	Closing Panel	48
a.	What do we know now about Civic Tourism?	48
b.	What's next for Civic Tourism?.....	49
4.5	Conclusion	50

Executive Summary

The second Civic Tourism Conference was held in Southern New England from October 15-18, 2008 with Blackstone Valley (RI) serving as the hub. The first civic tourism conference was held in Prescott Arizona in 2006.

Civic tourism aims to put local people and stewardship of place back into the experience of the tourist and local citizen. Visiting a place becomes your civic duty because you are conscious of the people living there and the fragileness of a place. Citizens living in a place must be a steward of the place.

The conference featured hands on learning. The places of Southern New England became our laboratory for learning. Wednesday, October 15, featured academic presentations, an interpretive training workshops and the keynote address by Scott Russell Sanders. Thursday, October 16, started with a roundtable on future planning of civic places followed by ten afternoon workshops. Friday, the 17th of October, was lab day. Five sites in Southern New England served as civic learning laboratories. Saturday morning, October 18th, served as a day for integrating lessons learned from the conference.

People came from across the US, Canada, Europe and Africa. Those taking part in conversations were tourism practitioners, academics, planners – and a host of other diverse professionals.

This overall report is not an integrated, word-for-word transcript of everything that occurred or was said. Instead, it represents highlights and sometimes, fragments of the conference experience.

This section of the report is not a conventional executive summary where you get the briefing highlights of the entire report. This summary presents the re-occurring themes and issues from the conference and points to where the tourism field may have to go next.

Definitional Issues

The conference was organized to examine this question: where has tourism been? Where does it have to go next?

The results of the conference suggest it is back to the future with tourism. Tourism without all the “isms” is the essence. The proliferation of isms like geo-tourism, agri-tourism, cultural tourism, ecotourism, sustainable tourism, and civic tourism make it all confusing for the visitor. Each competes with the others for brand recognition.

Associating the word civic with tourism, for some at the conference, only gummed up the works even more. Some saw civic tourism as a market, while for others, it served as a method. Or, one of many methodologies for developing an interesting place that people want to visit. Set tourism free by taking off the modifier: civic. Underneath all of the isms

is a realization that tourism has to get back to the basics of traveling and hosting responsibly. It is about authenticity, respect for local people, and discovering whole places.

Fostering and featuring a whole place or a whole community is the tourism model for our future. It is also a community we, as tourism practitioners, want to visit and learn from. Local people become tourists of their locality. This was the theme of Scott Russell Sanders in his keynote talk: "Traveling at Home." This idea suggests redefining what a tourist has to do to be counted as tourist. It has to become the person who visits locally and does not have to travel over 50 miles. The national standard of 50 miles was set so all could have a common yardstick for reporting. But, requiring someone to travel over 50 miles to count as a statistic has probably become irresponsible behavior because it encourages the use of petroleum (to count) and was set in the era of cheap oil. We are now in the era of post peak oil and climate change and traveling locally has to become more the rule than the exception.

The future of tourism is more than defining the go-forward role of the tourism professional. Rather, the future of tourism is about working as a collaborative team with citizens, visitors, municipal planners, arts and culture organizations, retailers – in effect, anyone that shapes the experience of a place.

Requisite Changes in Behavior

A re-occurring conference theme was the requisite changes in behavior on the part of all the players who shape a place. The change in behavior is required individually as well as on the part of the whole tourism team:

- Figure out how to manage development so it enhances a place and does not lessen it.
- Tell the next story of a place which is distinct from past stories. In telling the next story, reveal what is real, even messy and certainly feature local characters that make a place interesting Local story telling has to become viral.
- Visitors must come to a place for what it is; not what they come to turn it into.
- Citizens must become stewards of their place, protectors of place.
- The diverse professionals who are stewards of the experience of place have to become a team. This won't be easy. As one of the conference goers put it: "it will require a lot of group therapy."
- Create a tourism brand without an "ism." Instead, place the focus on the quality of the experience of visiting and the roles people have to play as a responsible traveler and host.
- The five lab sites, (Cape Cod, Mystic, Newport, Providence and Westerly) along with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and New Commons, commit to working as a region both online and in-person. Not so much to market the place as a region, although that may occur later. Rather, to begin with learning: what is working "there" that I can bring here? What can we learn together?

- Some counsel to the planners of the next conference from the lab sites and CT2 planners: make it shorter and less packed with stuff. Make it two days instead of spread over four days. Give people more room to breathe. And, don't drop the labs as they are the highlight. In fact, consider organizing the entire conference around the labs. The workshops that occur before the labs deliver content to apply in the lab experience.

1. Foundation: What is Civic Tourism?

1.1 Dan Shilling, the originator of civic tourism (slightly edited)

The Mission: "To expand tourism's purpose from the focus on an end (number of beds sold) to add the means as well – that is, from a market-driven growth goal to tourism as a tool that can help the public preserve and enhance what they love about their place, while revitalizing the local economy."

Three strategies from Dan Shilling:

Rethinking Economics urges communities to connect tourism planning to restorative, place-based market policies.

Connect to the Public recommends engagement practices that foster understanding of and support for a responsible tourism ethic.

Invest in the Story encourages a robust conceptual and financial commitment to place-making.

Shilling goes on to say: "civic tourism is about appreciating tourism as a public good, valuing it as a public responsibility, and practicing it as a public art."

1.2 Planners of Civic Tourism 2

Going back to the dictionary for origins... civic is: "of the town" (or place). The Latin root "is citizen" (of the people). Thus, civic tourism makes the engagement of local people and local places central to the experience of being there. As professionals, we work for the greater good of residents and the well being of the community.

With civic tourism, the goal is to move beyond a traditional look at a place from the outside in, or at a distance, to take a deeper look inside to experience the soul of a place. This move requires us to be in and with the place as it really is – beyond the veneer to see the warts. In this way, we elevate the responsibility for taking care of our places for all whom engage it whether it is a visitor or a resident. By collectively strengthening a place, civic pride grows. Civic tourism is about not leaving a detrimental footprint in a place, but instead, giving back and enriching a place. To enrich a place requires us to know its roots, soul, and aspirations.

And for us, Civic tourism requires the use of a whole place view that incorporates: culture and character, ecology, learning/local community knowledge, local economy and everything else that comes together to makes a place whole.

And finally, the character of each place is different based on where it is on a tourism continuum of: starting...evolving... maturing...rethinking. We have lab sites at various points on this continuum. On Saturday morning, the 18th, in the conference closing, we compared and contrasted the distinct qualities, lessons learned, and problems of each type of site.

1.3 Macro Conditions Impacting Tourism

- There is a distinct market shift away from mass market tourism.
- People and their cars: will they drive less as gas prices rise in the face of climate change and post-peak oil?
- Continued loss of local retail. One of the “character attractions” people visit places to experience is retail with character. In turn, retail with character, shapes the evolving character of our places...there is a symbiotic relationship.
- Second homes/mobile society/instant home – and how invested we are to a home.
- Since 1950, the population of the US has doubled, but nothing was done about creating the transit infrastructure to accommodate more people either driving or riding.
- Loss of marine food chain.
- The emergent need for local and regional food production to counter industrial food which can no longer be sustained due to transportation costs and the amount of petroleum required to make industrialized food.

1.4 Wednesday Morning and Afternoon...10-15-08

Pawtucket, Slater Mill Historic Site

Interpretive Training

Session sponsored by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor
Presentation was made by Tim Merriman and Lisa Brochu of the National Association of Interpretation, Boulder, Colorado. The NAI is known for its certification program for interpreters.

A full day of interpretive training took place at Slater Mill. Sixty (60) participants, mostly from historic organizations, learned the techniques and value of telling the story of a place. Interpretation of a community's story is a component of place-making and a key to Civic Tourism.

Wednesday Afternoon

Pawtucket, RI Pawtucket Congregational Church

Academic and Practitioner paper presentations

Session organized and sponsored by Boston University, Dr. Sam Mendlinger presiding. Juried papers, based on concepts of Civic Tourism, were presented to an audience of 36.

Presenter	Title of Paper
Masaki Miyake	A Qualitative Study of the Blackstone Valley Rhode Island*
Diane Gaede	An Explosion of Place-Building & Civic Tourism in North Colorado*
Tomomi Wakiya	Barriers Towards the Inclusive Design of Tourism*
Laradene Padurean	Dynamic of Tourism Destination*
Margie Butler	Outside In-Inside Out: The Core of a Creative City*
Eileen Warburton	Streamlining Disaster Planning for the Cultural Community*
Scott Standish	Preserving the Spirit of Place*
Peter Flinker	Civic Tourism and the Ecosystem Paradigm*
Munira Anyonge	Community Based Wildlife Conservation Area*
Darren Rudloff	The Role of CVB's in Visitor Product*
Alex Sommer	Broad Street Regeneration Project*

*See Presentations at <http://www.sustainabletourismlab.com/civictourism.htm>

Wednesday Evening

Pawtucket, RI Congregational Church

Reception hosted by New England Coastal Wine Trail and Narragansett Beer. Light Rhode Island fare was offered as an exposé' of local food and drink.

The evening opened with a welcome by Conference Chair Dr. Robert Billington and Civic Tourism originator Mr. Dan Shilling.

Mr. Robert Leaver of New Commons instructed the group that this conference was going to work as a community conversation that began in Prescott Arizona at the first Civic Tourism Conference.

Mr. Shilling introduced the Keynote presenter Mr. Scott Russell Sanders, Professor of English at Indiana University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

1.5 “Traveling Home”...Keynote address by Scott Russell Sanders, Author

Since 1971 Scott has been teaching at Indiana University, where he is a Distinguished Professor of English.

Some of you heard me give a talk entitled “The Geography of Somewhere”¹ at the First Civic Tourism conference, in Prescott, Arizona, in 2006, and others may have read the talk online or in Dan Shilling’s book, where it serves as an introduction. At the risk of repeating myself, I’m going to begin by recounting the major points of that talk, for I wish to build on them here.

I raised some eyebrows in Prescott by saying that I believe “Americans gad about too much. Our ceaseless mobility burns up the earth’s dwindling supply of petroleum, destabilizes the climate, enslaves us to tyrannical regimes in the Middle East, embroils us in war, buries more and more of our landscape under pavement, and shatters our communities. No person concerned about the fate of our planet and the welfare of our descendants should encourage any more idle movement.”

“Too often,” I said, “the kind of travel we call tourism is only another form of shopping, treating the whole country as a gigantic mall offering trinkets and distractions for sale. Too often, it is driven by a yen for golfing or gambling, a craving for novelty or scenery, or by simple boredom. If we’re going to rove about the continent, burning up oil and jeopardizing our grandchildren’s future, we ought to be prompted by larger motives.”

I went on to say what I thought those larger motives might be, by comparing “Travel at its best” to “a kind of vision quest, in which we journey away from the familiar world to encounter some alien setting, some natural or cultural or spiritual presence that enlarges our understanding, and then we journey home to act out that larger vision in our households, neighborhoods, towns, and cities. As in a mythic quest, what begins as a private search ends up enhancing the life of the tribe.”

I suggested that the travelers’ understanding is most enriched through an encounter with a distinctive, coherent, and powerful sense of place—a place that defies the homogenizing influences of box stores, strip malls, franchises, cookie-cutter suburbs, tyrannical highways, and vapid mass media. Then I outlined some of the qualities that give certain places a feeling of character and charisma, making them worthy of a visitor’s deep engagement and of a citizen’s love. Here’s an abbreviated list of those qualities:

- A real place feels as though it belongs where it is, as though it has grown there, shaped by weather and geography, rather than being imported from elsewhere and set down arbitrarily like a mail-order kit. The connection to geography shows up in building materials, for example, as well as in architecture and food.

¹ Available at: www.sustainabletourismlab.com

- A real place is distinguished by a vigorous local economy, one that draws on resources from the region and on the skills of its own citizens. Key enterprises, from factories to coffee shops, reflect the taste and judgment of the local people who own them, rather than the dictates of distant corporations. Dollars spent in such a community circulate there for a spell, instead of being immediately whisked away to some remote headquarters.
- Visitors know they have arrived in a cherished place when artists choose not merely to live there but to photograph and paint it, to write and sing of it; when archaeologists and historians delve into its past; when naturalists keep track of the local flora and fauna; and when elders pass on all of this lore to the young.
- A real place conveys a sense of temporal depth, a sense that people have been living and laboring here for a long time. The traces of earlier generations are preserved in festivals and folkways and habits of speech; in old buildings that have been restored and kept in service; in landscapes that are still devoted to traditional uses such as orchards, dairies, and woodlots. Such a place is alive and changing, like any organism, gaining and losing residents, tearing down and building up. Yet there is continuity amid the change. The presence of history, good and bad, not only enriches our experience of place, it also reminds us that we who are alive now suffer as well as benefit from the actions of our ancestors, and that our actions, in turn, will affect those who come after us.
- A real place keeps us mindful of nature, as it keeps us mindful of history. In the built environment one feels the presence of the living environment—in parks, gardens, bike and pedestrian trails, river corridors, beaches, urban forests, and yards given over to native plants, and in all the creatures, from crows to coyotes, that share the place with our two-legged kind.
- Just as we relish the presence of nature, so, in real places, we delight in the company of other people. A vital community provides many public gathering spots, from auditoriums and farmers' markets and cafes to playgrounds and plazas and parks, where people are free to mix with neighbors and strangers; the more diverse the mixture, the more illuminating the experience is likely to be. In a truly democratic gathering space, people from all walks of life may argue and swap stories and admire one another's babies and sympathize with one another's aches, all the while feeling at home. The true wealth of a community shows up not in the grandeur of private residences or fancy stores but in the quality of libraries, schools, museums, parks, courthouses, galleries, and other public arenas.
- Alluring places invite us to immerse ourselves, to open all our senses. We encounter such places not by gazing through windshields or by gaping at screens but by walking. Sidewalks become more important than streets, parks more important than parking lots, legs more important than wheels. On foot, we experience the world in three dimensions; we move at a speed that allows us to absorb and savor and reflect.

I could have described a good many other qualities that distinguish real places from phony ones. But with this sampling I hoped to suggest why cities and towns endowed

with a rich, deep, coherent sense of place attract visitors, and why these visitors might be inspired to nurture similar qualities back home.

.....

I concluded my talk in Prescott by saying that the sort of tourism we ought to encourage would show us how people richly inhabit a place, how they cooperate, make decisions, solve problems, enjoy one another's company, and look after their home ground. It would renew our appreciation for the security that arises from neighborliness and mutual aid. It would encourage us to think about our cities, towns, and countryside as arenas for our common life, and not merely as patchworks of private property. It would remind us that we are responsible for the care of our communities, for the health of the land, and for one another. In short, such tourism would educate us to become better citizens, first of our neighborhoods and ultimately of our nation and planet.

In my Prescott talk, I never used the word "sustainable," but in outlining my vision of civic tourism, I was describing the only form of tourism that seems likely to be sustainable. To call any kind of tourism "sustainable" means that we can reasonably imagine it continuing far into the future without degrading the quality of life in the place being visited, without exhausting the visitors' interest, and without damaging the earth.

How far into the future should we try to imagine? Businesses often look to the next fiscal year, or merely to the next quarter; politicians often look to the next election, or the next press conference; households often look to the next paycheck; addicts of all sorts, from alcoholics to recreational shoppers, often look only to the next fix. By contrast with this short-term thinking, the Iroquois people of upstate New York instruct their leaders to look seven generations into the future when making decisions. Although I admire this instruction, I don't pretend to be able to see seven generations ahead. But since I have three granddaughters—the oldest of them just beginning kindergarten, the youngest of them not yet a year old—I try to imagine the span of their lifetime, which, if they're blessed with good health and a stable society, should last through this century.

If we try to envision a form of tourism that might be sustainable for the next century, what large trends must we bear in mind? The trends that seem most significant to me, not merely for the future of tourism but for all human activities, are the end of cheap oil, the decline in the standard of living for most Americans, and the degradation of earth as a home for life, especially the disturbance of the global climate. I will say a few words about each item on this list, but first let me emphasize that I do not welcome these gloomy predictions, nor do I speak about them as any sort of expert. I have merely read the arguments of people who *are* experts, and I am convinced that any thoughtful vision of our future must grapple with the conditions I am sketching here.

.....

The first of these trends is the depletion of the world's supply of oil and natural gas, even as demand for fossil fuel relentlessly rises. Experts disagree about exactly when the production of oil and gas from existing or newly discovered fields will reach a maximum and begin to decline—some say this moment of so-called “peak oil” has already occurred, others say it will occur within the next few decades. But all agree that the decline in production is inevitable within this century, as the world's existing fields are being drained much more rapidly than new fields are being discovered. (The global discovery of new deposits peaked in the 1960s, and has been declining ever since, averaging only 10-50% of the annual use.)² The decline in supply will coincide with the increasing clamor for oil from rapidly industrializing economies in Asia and South America. Moreover, the remaining oil will be much more expensive to extract, ship, and refine than the more easily accessible deposits that we have already burned.

The result of these trends will be an inexorable rise in the cost of oil and gas, and of everything made from or powered by oil and gas. While the prices of gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, heating oil, plastics, artificial fertilizers, pharmaceuticals and other petroleum byproducts will oscillate up and down with the vicissitudes of the marketplace, they will do so on an upward-trending line. Since our entire economy—indeed, the global economy—is built on cheap energy, this rise in the price of petroleum-based fuels and materials will affect every aspect of our lives—the kinds of work we do, how we travel, how we heat and cool our homes, where we get our food, how we entertain ourselves.

What are the implications for tourism? Air travel will increasingly become a luxury, as will long-distance travel by automobile. So-called recreational vehicles will disappear from the roads. As a result, destinations such as Disney World and Las Vegas and enterprises such as cruise lines that depend on a vast flow of visitors traveling from far away will begin to wither. International travel will diminish, and sites dependent on foreign visitors will suffer accordingly.

At the same time, destinations close to major population centers may benefit. Like much else in our lives, tourism will become more local. Instead of driving or flying across the country to national parks or resorts, more people will visit state parks and cultural centers in their home regions. Instead of taking bus tours of Europe, more Americans will seek out comparably vibrant settlements and landscapes in our own country. Travelers will take shorter trips, with fewer jumps from place to place, and perhaps with longer stays in these nearby destinations. They will be drawn to communities that are designed for walkers or bicyclists rather than drivers, and that offer high quality public transportation, such as light rail and electric trolleys. They will also be drawn to communities that are conveniently accessible by passenger railroad service, which is by far the most fuel-efficient mode of transport.

In response to higher gasoline prices, Americans have already reduced their

² http://www.peakoil.com/wiki/index.php/Global_Oil_Discovery

driving—logging 50 billion fewer miles between November 2007 and August 2008 than during the same period a year earlier.³ This reduction in driving, coupled with a shift toward smaller vehicles, has led to a drop in revenue from the federal gasoline tax, and to a serious shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund. Congress recently voted to appropriate \$9 billion from the general fund to cover this deficit—thereby adding to the national debt without addressing the underlying problem. The problem is that our road system is overbuilt and under-maintained. The interstate highway system is likely to deteriorate further, making driving more hazardous as well as more damaging to cars and trucks. If the gas tax is increased in an effort to fund proper maintenance, drivers will cut back even more on their mileage, thus continuing a downward spiral. If we’re going to draw on general funds to subsidize transportation, it would be far more economical, and environmentally sound, to refurbish and expand the passenger rail system, which was once the best in the world and is now the worst among industrialized nations.

The rise in the price of oil and natural gas will likewise undermine industrial agriculture, which relies on cheap energy for the manufacture of fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides, for the processing, shipping, and storage of crops, for irrigation, and for the operation of its gigantic machinery. Over the next century, agriculture will revert to the practices that were common before the cheap-oil binge—it will be smaller in scale, less dependent on chemical inputs, more reliant on human labor and skill and on animal power, more respectful of the health of soils and waters, and it will serve a primarily local market. Similarly, global franchises that sell cheap goods made in low-wage countries 12,000 miles away will gradually collapse as the cost of manufacturing and shipping escalates. Local industries and crafts and retail stores will begin to recover, and they will be more responsive to the tastes and needs of their communities. Interchangeable malls on the outskirts of town will shrivel, and distinctive Main Streets will rebound.

Again, the implications for tourism are clear: destinations that rely on importing industrially-produced food and goods from great distances will suffer, while towns and cities that support a robust local agriculture and manufacturing base will thrive. Visitors will be attracted to cities and towns that demonstrate how we can wean ourselves from fossil fuel—by emphasizing conservation and compact development, for example, by embracing green building codes (such as the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, standards), by sponsoring municipal wind farms, by encouraging the installation of solar collectors on homes, by facilitating car-sharing and bicycle commuting. Such visionary communities will appeal to visitors by providing glimpses of a viable future.

.....

The second large trend that will affect the future of tourism is the decline in real income for most Americans and the increasing burden of debt carried by individuals,

³ U.S. Department of Transportation, 12 Aug 2008: www.dot.gov/affairs/thwal708.htm

households, and our nation as a whole. Except for the highest income brackets in our country, real earnings, adjusted for inflation, have been stagnant or decreasing for the past thirty years.⁴ Virtually all of the benefit from rising worker productivity since the advent of computers has gone to those highest income brackets. Increases in household income during this period have been due almost entirely to the increase in the number of hours worked and the entry of more women into the workforce. In most households, there are no more available workers, and no more hours available for working.

As the cost of basic necessities, from housing to healthcare, has increased, while hourly wages have stagnated or declined, most Americans have had less and less money left over for discretionary spending. Our net household savings rate has been declining steadily, and is now close to zero, the lowest level since the Great Depression. (The comparable figure in France is 12 percent, and in Germany 11 percent.)⁵ We have maintained our inflated rate of consumption mainly through borrowing – on credit cards, on home equity loans, and on tax cuts that have inflated the national debt. The average American household now carries \$9,000 in credit card debt. Adding in car loans, mortgages, and other forms of credit, the average household now owes a record 134 per cent of disposable income, nearly double the figure from a generation earlier.⁶ The total household debt is now greater than the Gross Domestic Product.

Over the past decade, as families maxed out their credit cards, millions of Americans financed major purchases, medical bills, and even monthly expenses, by borrowing against the equity in their homes. Now that house prices are sinking, that source of credit has dried up, and millions of people owe more money on their houses than their houses are worth. The result has been a record number of foreclosures and personal bankruptcies. Even after the current housing bubble collapses and recovery begins, the rising cost of energy will make the far-flung suburbs and bloated Mc Mansions even less attractive, and will further depreciate their value.

As a nation, through federal spending, we have also been living far beyond our means. When Ronald Reagan took office in 1980, the national debt stood at just under \$1 trillion. When he left office, the figure had tripled, to nearly \$3 trillion, mainly through a combination of tax cuts and higher military spending. Bill Clinton's administration began with a debt of over \$4 trillion and ended with a debt of \$5.5 trillion. During the second Bush administration, the debt has so far doubled, to nearly \$11 trillion, again primarily due to the coupling of tax cuts with dramatic increases in military spending. This amounts to a debt of \$34,000 for every man, woman, and child in America.⁷ To fund the current Wall Street bailout, Congress has just raised the debt ceiling to \$11.3 trillion. Some of this debt is

⁴ Jonathan Shaw, "Debtor Nation: The Rising Risks of the American Dream, on a Borrowed Dime," *Harvard Magazine* (July-August 2007).

⁵ <http://oberon.sourceoecd.org/vl=281028/cl=18/nw=l/rpsv/factbook/020202-gl.htm>

⁶ Center for American Progress: www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/04/econ_snapshot.html/ (April 2008).

⁷ http://www.brillig.com/debt_clock/ and <http://zfacts.com/p/318.html>

owed to American citizens, but nearly a quarter is owed to foreign investors, and our continued borrowing depends on a steady flow of money from abroad. In 2006, for the first time in half a century, more money flowed out of America to pay foreign investors than flowed into America from our investments abroad.⁸ From being the world's largest investor, the United States has now become the world's largest debtor nation.

We have not incurred this debt in order to invest in research, new technologies, manufacturing facilities, infrastructure, education, or other sources of future wealth; we have incurred this debt primarily to fund wars and current consumption. Our federal government is currently borrowing more than \$3 billion a day, more than \$1 trillion a year. We have not paid for the savings and loan debacle of the 1980s, have not paid for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have not paid for the recent bailouts of banks and Wall Street firms and Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac; we have merely put these enormous expenditures on the public charge card, and have passed along the burden to future taxpayers, including our children and grandchildren. As a nation, we are strapped. Meanwhile, the rapid rise in private indebtedness, foreclosures, job losses, and bankruptcies has forced most Americans to cut back on discretionary spending.

Optimists will claim that this is a temporary setback, that the American economy will soon come roaring back, that the debt will evaporate, and that once again we'll become a nation of free spenders. I am more persuaded by the pessimists, or what I would call the realists, who argue that we are in for a long-term decline in living standards. According to this view, the decline will be driven not only by mounting debt, but also by the transfer of American businesses and real estate to foreign ownership; by the decades-long neglect of our nation's infrastructure, from bridges to sewage systems; by the deterioration of our schools, and the consequent deterioration of our workforce; by the loss of our manufacturing base; by the distortion of our economy through military spending; by the undermining of trust in our government, financial institutions, and corporations, both at home and abroad; and by the increasing disparities between the rich and the poor. And all of these factors are in addition to our nation's delay in reducing our dependence on oil, in developing renewable sources of energy, and in addressing serious environmental challenges, especially global warming.

If we are indeed headed toward a long term decline in living standards, again the implications for tourism are clear. The wealthiest Americans will still frequent luxury destinations, of course; but I am not interested in tourism that is available only to the rich. For the foreseeable future, most Americans are simply going to have less money to spend on transportation, hotels, restaurant meals, entrance fees, or travel-related shopping. The most attractive destinations will require short trips, including journeys by railroad or streetcar. They will offer abundant public spaces, such as plazas and open-air markets and parks, where admission is free, as well as museums and historic buildings where the admission charge is modest. They will offer inexpensive accommodations and meals that

⁸ Shaw op.cit

carry the flavor of the place—bed and breakfasts or historic hotels, for example, rather than chain motels, and local restaurants serving local produce rather than generic fast food. These destinations will be inviting to walkers, because the streets are clean and safe, the old neighborhoods are intact, the downtown is filled with intriguing shops, and the citizens of the place enjoy a convivial life.

.....

The third large trend that will affect the future of tourism is the degradation of the environment, both locally and globally. Some of the effects are obvious—the pollution of rivers, lakes, and beaches will discourage visitors, as will air pollution. Some effects are less obvious. For example, the necessity of imposing fees for the release of carbon into the atmosphere will drive up the cost of energy, and therefore of nearly everything else. Similarly, the erosion and poisoning of topsoil due to industrial farming will drive up the cost of food. The proliferation of toxins in the soil, water, and air will increase our healthcare expenditures, which are already by far the highest per capita in the world. Population growth, augmented by immigration, will place greater pressure on our land, natural resources, and fellow species.

But the most serious effects of environmental degradation, not merely on tourism but on the habitability of our planet, will result from the destabilizing of earth's climate. I speak of "destabilization," rather than "global warming" or "climate change," because the latter terms do not convey the dire nature of the predictions. There is a nearly unanimous consensus among scientists that the atmospheric heating already underway will lead to greater extremes of weather—longer droughts, fiercer heat waves, more frequent flooding, more violent storms—and possibly to major shifts in ocean currents and wind patterns.⁹ The evidence so far supports these predictions—the record high temperatures, the increased number and intensity of hurricanes, the melting of ice caps and glaciers and permafrost, the drying up of rivers, the rising of sea levels. The spread of epidemic disease and invasive species brought on by atmospheric warming has already added to our healthcare costs, depleted our fisheries, and devastated our forests. The annual cost of damage from storms, tornadoes, and flooding has risen into the tens of billions of dollars.

There is an equally broad consensus among scientists that the release of greenhouse gases from human activity is a major contributor to this atmospheric heating. With just under 5 per cent of the world's population, the United States produces roughly 25 per cent of those emissions. Yet so far, as a nation, we have failed to address this looming catastrophe in any meaningful way. There have been piecemeal responses, by individuals and businesses and municipalities, and even by a few states, but there have been no comprehensive measures to radically reduce our carbon impact or to prepare for the likely consequences of climate destabilization. Meanwhile, there has been no serious effort at reducing greenhouse emissions in the world's rapidly industrializing nations, such as

⁹ United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

China and India; and even in nations, such as those in the European Union, which have shown a higher degree of concern, there has been no significant reduction in emissions. So it seems inevitable that the atmosphere will continue heating, and that weather and climate will depart more and more from the patterns within which our urban industrial civilization developed.

No one can be sure how any given place will fare, but the overall effect on our economy and our quality of life will certainly be harmful. As conditions deteriorate, tourism is likely to be seen by many people as a luxury, both because of tight finances and because of rising concerns about the ecological costs of travel. Like the other large trends I've mentioned, this one suggests that the forms of tourism most likely to endure will be more local, more reliant on public transportation, more focused on experiences of community than on recreational shopping.

Individual towns and cities cannot solve global environmental problems on their own, of course, but they can lobby for municipal, state, and federal policies that boldly address these problems. They can contribute to the collective effort through practices I've already mentioned, such as the fostering of local agriculture and renewable energy sources, or through the use of living roofs on municipal buildings and solar-powered streetcars. Travelers will be drawn to communities that take good care of their home ground, where the air and water are clean, green space is abundant, trees line the streets, yards and parks are burgeoning with plants and butterflies and birds. Indeed, the more our environment as a whole deteriorates, the more attractive such green places will become.

.....

What I've been arguing here is that tourism can flourish over the next century only in communities that are ecologically sustainable, and our communities can flourish only in proportion as we move, individually and collectively, toward a more local, smaller scale, less violent, less consumptive way of life. If the human economy is to endure, it must align itself with the greater economy of nature. Anyone concerned about the long-term viability of tourism should therefore be equally concerned about local, state, national, and global efforts at shifting from an industrial growth economy to a steady-state economy grounded in ecology and conservation. Such a shift will require the development of energy derived from sun and wind and other renewable sources, the renewal of railroads and other systems of public transportation, the revival of locally-owned enterprises, the fostering of local foods and arts and other aspects of regional culture, the recovery of local news media, the protection of green spaces and wild lands, the enhancement of common goods such as parks and schools, the preservation of topsoil and clean water and breathable air, and the careful stewardship of nonrenewable resources such as oil.

Moving toward a sustainable society will also require a shift in consciousness. We will need to stop measuring "wealth" by the empty numbers traded on financial markets,

and begin measuring the true sources of wealth in the condition of earth's living systems, in human knowledge and skill, in productive enterprises, and in the real assets, both public and private, that actually contribute to our wellbeing.¹⁰ We will need to give up thinking of ourselves as free-floating individuals, empowered by money. We will need to re-imagine our lives as woven into human and natural communities, dependent for our well-being on the goods we share—from watersheds to scientific research, from the transportation system to the judicial system, from language to libraries. We will need to identify ourselves as conservers rather than consumers, as stewards of the earth's bounty rather than exploiters. We will need to recognize our kinship with other species. We will need to see that the construction and maintenance of a vast military complex, and the fighting of wars, is a grotesque waste of human and natural wealth, and a distraction from our real challenges.

The challenges we face are not primarily military, despite the ceaseless talk of terrorists and enemies. Our greatest challenges are ecological and social—the challenge of feeding ourselves, preserving adequate supplies of fresh water, defending ourselves from epidemic diseases, providing quality healthcare for all citizens, reducing our levels of mental illness and crime, renewing our schools, developing alternatives to cheap fossil fuels, reducing our greenhouse emissions, rebuilding our nation's decrepit infrastructure, recovering a sense of the common good.

The values necessary for meeting these challenges are out of fashion now, but they run deep in the American tradition; among them are prudence, generosity, simplicity, humility, thrift, compassion, forbearance, honesty, civic-mindedness, and concern for future generations. Communities that are best able to embody these values and face these challenges will be the most attractive places to visit as well as the most humane places to live.

All of this may be wishful thinking on my part, of course. Americans may keep on driving the interstates and crowding the airports and traveling to resorts and casinos until the oil runs out and foreclosure signs go up in front yards. But I have more faith in my fellow citizens than that. I am betting that more and more of us will wake up to our predicament, reconsider our behavior, and begin acting more conserving and responsibly in all aspects of our lives, including in the way we travel. If I overestimate our capacity for thoughtful change, and if we continue to consume and spend and mine and pave as recklessly as we have done for the past century, then the coming century will be grim indeed, and the fate of tourism will be the least of our concerns.

But I refuse to accept that dismal prospect. I won't surrender to such a future for my three young granddaughters, or for anyone else's children and grandchildren. No doubt some people will keep gadding about in search of thrills, amusement rides, floor

¹⁰ Herman Daly, "The Crisis: Debt and Real Wealth," <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/herman-daly/>

shows, slot machines, golf links, and auto races, as long as they can afford to do so. But I believe that such distractions will come to be seen as wasteful and vacuous. As the cumulative effects of rising energy costs, personal and public debt, and environmental stress take hold, many Americans, I predict, will hunger for something more substantial from their journeys. They will travel less for recreation than for illumination. In seeking visions of a desirable future, they will be drawn to places that demonstrate more wholesome and ecologically sound ways of living.

Henry David Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, "I have traveled a good deal in Concord." Readers have taken this to mean that he chose to explore his hometown and the surrounding countryside, rather than jaunt to more glamorous locales. No doubt that is part of what he meant. And we would all do well to pay closer attention to our neighborhoods. But Thoreau also ventured further afield, leaving records of his excursions up the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, as well as to Maine, Cape Cod, Long Island, and other destinations. So when he remarked, "I have traveled a good deal in Concord," I think he also meant that all of his journeys, near or far, deepened his understanding and affection for his home place, and thereby made him a better citizen of Concord. We would do well to bring the fruits of our own travels back to enrich the places from which we set out.

Our travels affect more than our home places and the places we visit. Every journey sends ripples of influence around the planet and into the future. Whether those influences are, on the whole, benign or destructive depends on how and why we travel, and on what we do with the knowledge we've gained. Because Earth is our only dwelling place, no matter where we go on our journeys, we are always traveling at home.

.....

The evening closed with a musical presentation by Plainfolk, a Worcester, MA based musical group who performs New England traditional music and wrote the theme song for the Blackstone Valley: "*Have you seen the Blackstone Valley*". The evening with Scott Russell Sanders, Plainfolk, the New England Coastal Wine Trail, and Narragansett Beer, a local brewer, were all components that set the tone for our Civic Tourism Conference.

2. Learning from Each Other in a Learning Community

2.1 Round Table on Future Planning of Civic Places

Thursday Morning...10-16-08

Stadium Theater for the Performing Arts, Woonsocket, RI

(Morning reception at Stadium Theater lobby)

This roundtable was conducted among Kip Bergstrom, Executive Director, Stamford, CT Urban Redevelopment Commission (Former Director, Rhode Island Economic Policy Council) Costas Christ, 1st President of the Adventure Council, and serves as Chairman of the Adventures on Travel Expo Conferences. He also writes a monthly travel column for the National Geographic Adventurer Magazine, Graham Miller is a Senior Lecturer in Management at the University of Surrey, England, where he teaches issues relating to business ethics, sustainability and the tourism industry, Robert Billington, President and founder of the Blackstone Valley Tourism and the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory. Bob has always been an entrepreneur. His interest in community development, job creation, pride of place and education have all come together under the non-profit agency that he has lead for the past 20 years. He served as moderator for the Civic Tourism 2 Conference.

These six questions were to serve as the roundtable agenda. But since the conversation was so rich, the group only addressed the first question on whole places and the last question on leadership.

- How do we make the whole place the product, integrating tourism into the other elements of a place? Handling the creative tension of holding the soul and honing character of a place and growing it at the same time? Tourist as visitor, tourist as member of the local community: how does the local community invite in the people that tour a place?
- Southern NE is a natural region composed of many destinations, people want to experience. Creating this regional experience requires crossing conventional boundaries: How do we do this?
- Assuming the next generation of tourism organizations will look, feel, and operate differently than those currently in use, what will they look like/what will they do?
- How to develop integrated funding strategies that moves tourism beyond current, compartmentalized tourism sources? Metrics of success?
- How to create collective leadership that forms a tourism-governance collaborative among government, business, not-for-profit and citizens?

Outcomes from the lively panel discussion

Whole Places

We are not after presenting one sense of place, but a multitude of experiences. Have you ever noticed how each place has its own sound or sounds? A place has its own beat, dance or a soundtrack?

There is a delicate balance between responding to a market and holding the soul of a place. As economic forces succeed, character gets lost. Soul and character has something to do with the tolerance of deep differences vs. homogeneity. For example, learn about the benefits and drawbacks of mixing chain stores and locals like what is done in Mashpee Commons, Massachusetts? Learn about the benefits and drawbacks of allowing by zoning, only local stores like in Bar Harbor, Maine and Boulder, Colorado?

Intentionally, keep some stuff as crappy/funky to ensure character stays present. The whole place can't be the product. Keep some bits back for ourselves – encourage locals to be tourists or make stuff hard to find. Thus, create conditions for the discovery of hidden places.

The move to virtual communities creates a longing for authenticity. The challenge for civic tourism: community is not necessarily attached to place. For example, in young people there is a spirit of adventure, yet they want both virtual and real spaces; that is how they experience community.

Place-making is always local while marketing is regional.

Ultimately, tourism and place-making is about stories – finding and telling stories.

Leadership

Challenge one: sustaining leadership for the long haul required for civic engagement to evolve or unfold a place. The debate ensued: are leaders born or created?

Challenge two: working through the historic resistance/allergic reaction to being convened and facilitated because what we need is a sustained, facilitated conversation among people to evolve our places.

Challenge three: determining the right scale effort to solve for what problems.

2.2 Conversations at Lunch

Thursday Lunch

Woonsocket, RI Main Street

Ten locally owned restaurants and cafes, along Main Street hosted lunch for participants that combined several pre-designed workshops with topical conversations that were generated from the morning roundtables.

- Workshop on Preservation Future/Engaging the Community
- Workshop of Geotourism
- Workshop on Putting the Heart Back in Your Community
- Workshop on Academic and Practitioner Papers
- Three Spontaneous but Directed Conversations

Thursday Afternoon

Woonsocket, RI St Ann's Arts and Cultural Center

After lunch, participants gathered to reflect on the “nuggets” from the lunch discussions.

Nuggets taken from lunch discussions

Tourism and place-making is about stories

- There is no place without a story or many stories...story has no value if it is not told, and received (over and over)... there is integrity and value of stories and storytellers...the only stories worth telling are stories that are relevant.
- There are great modern stories too. Use the media to tell stories with the new generation – pod-casts, etc.
- The story is about the spontaneous back-and-forth, give-and-take. It's about the front line person who responds to customers (of the Inn, attraction, restaurant and so on).
- Put our heart back into developing the stories that matter. Use a holistic approach step back and include everyone. If you miss someone, go back and get them.
- Allow stories to evolve. Keep the parts related to each other. What happens when stories conflict? Interpretation is not about giving information. It's not just one story...it is multiple stories. All the stories need to be told – upside and downside. We need to tell the whole story. We can tell the story with heart; and in the devastation, use hope to build the story.

Is leadership born? Created? How to sustain leadership for intense civic engagement?

- Is leadership: born, created, developed, or thrust upon you – commitment to take action is the deciding factor? Resourceful leadership is essential, e.g., BRVNHCC model.
- Assume network of leadership...understand systems...use the network with the hub of leadership is critical.
- Put resources in the right place because sustaining leadership takes intentional support/resources. This creates credible leadership with professional skills, technical expertise and builds consensus in a dynamic system.

Not one sense of place... create a place with multiple sensations

- Keep some stuff or hold bits back for locals. For the visitor, allow for discovery of hidden places, especially around what's the local "sound" or "dance"?
- Don't call it crappy, call it local and real...A little history goes a long way
- Need mixture of tourism experiences...Be sure the area you are promoting/marketing is easy to navigate for visitors (signage/way finding).
- Who really owns tourism? Who's the tourist? Is local 25 miles away from another state/country?
- People who know the history have the stories that enrich the experience.

2.3 Ten Civic Tourism Workshops were held of which 5 were 1 hour and 5 were 2-hour sessions. *See workshops on www.sustainabletourismlab.com

Round 1 – 1-hour workshops

- Preservation: A program for your town or city presented by Ron Anzalone, Director of Office of Preservation Initiatives, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
- Economics of Whole Place-making presented by Kip Bergstrom, Executive Director of Stamford CT Urban Redevelopment Commission
- Value Tourism presented by Tim Tyrell of Arizona University

Round 2 – 1-hour workshops

- Funding Civic Tourism presented by David Kahley, President and CEO of the Progress Fund
- Agricultural Tourism Landscapes and Livelihoods; Rebuilding community one farm at a time, presented by Stu Nunnery of the Rhode Island Center for Agricultural Promotion and Education

Two hour Workshops

- Resilient Tourism – Presented by Fred Presley from Resilient Futures and Susan Cowsill
- Project for Public Spaces – Presented by Ethan Kent
- Sustainable Tourism – Presented by Graham Miller, University of Surrey, England and Costas Christ of the World Travel and Tourism Council

- Civic Tourism – Presented by Dan Shilling
- Identify, Landscape, and Inside-Out Design presented by Maia Small of Thurlow Small Architecture, Joseph Silverman of Schwadesign and Wilfrid Gates of Gates Leighton and Associates

Thursday Evening Wright's Farm, Burrillville

The evening's meal and entertainment is in synchronization with the meaning of Civic Tourism.

Dinner was held at Wright's Farm Restaurant in Burrillville. An authentic Blackstone Valley Dinner was offered to the attendees. The meal is a favorite of the Blackstone Valley for over 70 years and is served Family Style. Italian immigrants who settled here in the Blackstone Valley to work in the textile mills created this dinner. Chicken Family Style is a meal of all you can eat, chicken, pasta, salad, and potato. It is served in 20 restaurants in the Blackstone Valley.

Music was provided by the Blackstone Valley's *Pendragon*. This group, formed over 25 years ago, now owns a theater, which hosts performers from around the world and teaches heritage-based music and dances of the Blackstone Valley. *Pendragon* wrote the first theme song of the Blackstone River Valley: *Working River*.

3. Civic Labs: Experiencing our Places in Action

3.1 Lab Overview: Friday...10-17-08

Laboratory comes from the Latin “to labor together.” The current popular meaning of a lab is the place where research and science happens. Civic labs bring us back to the root of the term so we are laboring together to improve the experience of the resident and traveler.

For us, a civic lab is where residents and guests – the tourist – discover and make tangible, together, that which will add value to the civic realm of the people and the place. And they do this by talking together and touring together using the lens of understanding what makes a whole place, whole.

A lab is a structured “touring” and learning experience led by a facilitator and “presented” by a local tour guide and team composed of knowledgeable, local people.

In a civic lab, visitors and locals worked together on the issues the place wants to put in the lab Petri dish. Specifically, we wanted folks to:

- Be in conversation about civic issues
- Collaboratively solve problems
- Learn from each other
- Laugh and tell stories

A civic lab is designed to be hands-on learning or learn-by-doing.

3.2 Outputs from a Lab

In the civic labs, we encouraged participants to, create together, for the improvement of the place and its people two kinds of “outputs:” provocations and recommendations.

Provocations to get us thinking, like...

- A question...an inquiry that shapes the quest
- An idea...a construct formed in the mind
- An image...seen and felt from the soul, like what you experience when you are dreaming or hearing a story
- The interplay...in between things like working on a dilemma or stuck in a paradox
- A practice...disciplined application to achieve a result
- Integration...what combines to form a whole
- A wildcard...go where ever you want to go beyond the previous categories; a wildcard defies categorizing

With a provocation, you are giving folks something to think about without the solution or the answer. A provocation sets the stage for self-directed learning. Provocations – what gets us thinking – are as valuable to unfolding a place as much as the practical, must-do recommendations.

Specific recommendations, like...

- Suggestions for the public engagement process
- Better use of signage and wayfaring
- Develop intercultural programs that bring different cultures and ethnicities together, where “each difference” group has a major contribution to make to the whole
- Suggest what can be done to ensure the place has soul
- Ideas for new public gathering places
- Specific civic tourism practices, in use, that need refinement or amplification, or suggest new ones to apply

There was no limit on the scope or number of recommendations. With the recommendations, a course of action was proposed.

3.3 How the Lab Experience Unfolds

On the bus

On the bus, the tour guide’s job was to orient people to the site and invite their additional questions based on the briefing paper read in advance. Note: not all sites did a paper, so some tour guides used the bus as the only briefing opportunity.

Walking and talking together

Labs are not a race to the finish, but are conducted as a slow walk to experience the unfolding of the soul and sense of a place. It is good to pause and reflect. Here are some things the lab participants were asked to help the whole group consider as they walked and talked:

- What combination of conversations and walking would make this lab work?
- What stories are vital to experiencing this place? Ask the locals to tell you stories?
- As lab participants, who are the local “characters,” you must engage?
- What issues of the civic realm are the ones to explore in depth?

The workshop debrief at the end of the lab or on the bus back to Pawtucket

Some sites held a workshop at the end of the lab to do the de-briefing (Mystic and Providence) and some sites used the bus ride back to Pawtucket to do the workshop. Some are a combination. All methods worked.

Discussion items for the debriefing:

Note: In making suggestions for this civic place, people were advised to please remember its unique history and context. Thus, not all things that have worked elsewhere will fit and work in this lab place.

- What are the conditions most impacting this site: immediate conditions, that are here now and the impact is felt and noticeable? Emergent conditions that are coming your way; not yet in full view? People were asked to state the condition and the impact in terms of opportunities and constraints the condition created?
- What are the collective observations such as: Strengths? Concerns?
- What is the group most holding about this place regarding the “outputs to provoke thinking” (ideas, images, questions, practices, dilemmas, integrations and wild cards)?
- What are the specific recommendations/outputs for the site?
- What nuggets – the essence – are best to share with the entire CT2 conference on Saturday morning?
- Wildcard?

Saturday morning, October 18th, in Pawtucket, RI

On Saturday morning, in addition to integrating the insights from the 5 labs, we tested the viability of these practices of civic tourism – a mix for the experiences of both visitors and locals – with all the lab participants:

- The experience of a place and its people are central
- Establish the same civic standards for where we go to visit as where we live
- Visitors engage citizens as partners by being with the local people who live in a place
- Visitors give back to a place that which fosters its common good – do no harm –in fact, repair, restore and regenerate a place you visit through your presence there
- Make the stories of a place emotionally present so they ripple in the hearts of citizens and guests and keep getting told
- Citizens become ambassadors for the place
- Wildcard – bring forward other practices not listed above

The labs were an opportunity to begin the process of discovering and unfolding the civic realm of each place as a whole place. October 17th was considered to be the start-up day for conducting an ongoing lab in each place. The labs aimed to mobilize folks – locally and from around the world – to continue working together beyond the lab, both in person (for locals), as well as online in the Civic Tourism2 workroom.

Note: Mystic organized its working group over a year ago to develop “Sustainable Mystic.” Thus, for Mystic, the lab was a step in a process underway instead of the start of something.

3.4 Lab Profiles

a. Cape Cod Cranberry Grower's - Creating a Cranberry Heritage Area

The Situation

Facilitators were Jeff LeFleur, Executive Director Cape Cod Cranberry Grower's Association; Dawn Allen Gates, Marketing Manager CCCGA; Michele Pecoraro, Vice President Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce

This lab was a bus tour of "Cranberry Country" in Plymouth and Carver, Massachusetts.

We visited several cranberry related businesses including wet and dry bogs, a transfer station and the largest cranberry grower in Massachusetts.

1. Arrived at Flax Pond Farm for Dry Harvest Demonstration & Tour of the "barn" here tools and a separator used for centuries were demonstrated. The barn also housed a shop filled with cranberry products. Flax Pond Farm has been hosting tourists for about 5 years and has educational programming for groups. Busses are welcome. There is sufficient parking and portable bathrooms are available on-site.
2. Just down the road, we saw Clement Pappas Collection Station where the berries for many farms are purchased, washed, separated by machine, and are transferred to processing plants. This station is not presently open to the public. Ours was an exclusive tour. There is presently no plan to open the plant up for tourists to view, though it has been discussed. The plant manager gave a brief talk: Cranberry processing "bog to bottle".
3. Arrive at Wet Harvest site, a newly purchased farm with plans to open up to the tourists. We toured the site and heard the new owners' farm plans which included a tourism component for this property.
4. Arrived at AD Makepeace and Tihonet Market. AD Makepeace is the largest cranberry grower in the state. The operation is headquartered on one bog but the family-owned company has hundreds. Tihonet Market is a great "general store" with an upscale feeling and lots of cranberry products, in addition to other food products. They have cooking demonstrations and each year they host a Cranberry Harvest Festival in October.

Lab Results

Strengths

- History of the nation's first and, for centuries, most productive cranberry economy
- Hundreds of cranberry bogs within close proximity, many can be seen from the road
- The spectacle of the harvest is during another wonderful natural draw for New England ... fall foliage. This is a time when visitors are already in the area so a built in audience.

- Several Cranberry Festivals exist already.
- 2008 a focus group of cranberry industry, tourism industry professionals, city/town planners and other municipal officials brainstormed about 1) who would be our partners? 2) What will be the opportunities, as individual businesses, and collectively as an industry? 3) What will be the obstacles? 4) What would an organization look like? And 5) how do we proceed – or not? We now look forward to gathering your expertise during this lab.
- Massachusetts is expanding its Department of Agriculture to work with the Office of Tourism on agri-tourism initiatives.
- Artists, artisans, bed and breakfast inns and tourism organizations are all willing partners in bringing tourism to the cranberry farms.
- It's a real experience. You come away with a whole new perspective and knowledge of the industry. Now you know those guys in waders in the Ocean Spray ads aren't a joke, they really do harvest that way!
- It's another way to stimulate the economy surrounding the cranberry industry and to add an additional revenue generator for farms.

Concerns

- The efforts needed to have the farms “tourist ready” like parking and bathroom facilities.
- These are working farms, so the tourist season is also the harvest season and most of these farms are family owned and operated with a small window to get all of the fruit harvested before the first frost. Who will handle the tourists?
- The CCCGA plan to have a visitor center/museum was seriously questioned. The lab group felt that what the visitor wants is the real experience, not a museum for cranberry education.
- Cranberry Festivals are one-weekend events ... short selling the season which is about 6-7 weeks.
- Wayfinding is a huge challenge due to limited signage and the limitations on how much and what kind of signs can be displayed. Signage on state roads is also difficult to get.

Creative Tensions

- Not all farmers are in favor of tourism due to the liability and interruption of having people on their bogs.
- Farms are in rural and residential areas. Traffic, noise, etc., due to tourism is a concern to neighbors.
- The bid for a State Heritage Area is a long and arduous process with dwindling funding as a reward.

Practices to provoke future thinking

- Extend festivals every weekend in season.
- Create a new “tour” with guides that are knowledgeable to take the onus off the farmers.

- Use interpretive signage and treat bogs as “scenic overlooks.”

Specific Recommendations

- Create standards of what a “public-ready” farm would require.
- Market an experience, not just a drive-by tour.
- Look into AA scenic routes.
- Create lots of integrated product – things to do, places to stay and dine, spa treatments all about cranberries.
- Work the Media!
- Don’t put the money and effort into a cranberry visitor center – put it into wayfinding and the experience.

Images of Cranberry Country

- It has been such an important part of the region’s history, culture and economy for hundreds of years, yet it is nearly invisible.
- The industry itself is made up of people who have lived here and contributed to the economy for generations. Just in 2008 alone cranberry related workers will put over 100 million back into the State’s economy.

Questions

- Is the industry market-ready for tourism?
- Why does the organization feel so strongly about a visitor center? What other organizations that do that already can take on the role for the Grower’s?

Nuggets from the lab experience

- Use new technology to attract and help people find their way … social networks, GPS coordinates, podcasts, YouTube videos.
- Benchmark any standards that might be out there for agri-tourism (Concord Grape growers).

b. Mystic: A Sustainable Village

The Situation

Facilitator, Fred Presley with Tour Guides Peter Glankoff, Maggie Jones, Dean Macris, and Jim Leahy

The Mystic laboratory experience will zip participants through nearly three miles of walking and hiking, over 200 years of history, two major cultural institution-attractions, and far-ranging insights and inquiries lead by local citizens, scholars, community leaders and enthusiasts. No one has ever considered Mystic quite this way. Our journey and lab is certain to spark imaginations and evoke fresh thinking about history, place and the potential of civic tourism. (Note: participants must wear good walking shoes and be prepared for a three-mile hike.)

Lab Results

Strengths

- Blown away by the charm and resources.
- It was a picture perfect day to experience Mystic from land and sea.
- Bus ride ideal opportunity to 'set the stage' for day's activities, and to follow up on return.
- Mystic is eminently walkable, even though many locals do not realize it. Visitors walk within the "hubs" (Mystic Seaport, Mystic Aquarium, downtown), but not among.
- Mystic's iconic place-making elements -- the bascule drawbridge, historic captains' homes, the Mystic River itself, and community pride, woven together, are proof that...
- Mystic *DOES* have a strong sense of place. How to best celebrate and protect it?
- Participants noticed and appreciated time and effort spent planning and organizing the lab, which unfolded even more perfectly than planned.
- Our concerns were not validated by participants (worries about the green wall, etc.)
- First-hand participation of community leaders.

Concerns

- When solutions were stated that would work, there was push back.
- Tourist is confused between downtown and "ye olde" village.
- Have yet to embark on a collaborative planning process.
- Each site had individual pride, but we didn't hear a cohesive story.
- Bad weather would have made for a less than pleasant experience.
- Too many participants would have challenged the logistics of a guided walk, making it difficult for participants to hear (fortunately neither of these things happened).
- Traffic and noise on Route 27.
- Safety.
- Lack of time to devote to each place -- we were on a strict time schedule.

Creative Tensions

- Residents vs. Tourists (us vs. them), lack of understanding about Civic Tourism.
- Capacity (or lack thereof) for bringing more people to Mystic in summer season.
- Challenge to unite residents, organizations, businesses around a common theme.
- Transportation- dependence on cars, alleged need for more parking, lack of pedestrian and bike lanes.
- Lack of appropriate wayfinding signage.
- Who's coordinating, convening, communicating?

Practices to provoke future thinking

- Throw out the sustainability term (jargon) and associated assumptions that people have.
- Clarify objectives.
- Clarification of what the "Mystic" brand evokes.
- Development pressures – impact and management.
- Climate change impacts.

Specific Recommendations

- Bring the young people more directly into creating the future of Mystic.
- Make obvious, for future tourists, the availability of the walk through nature and to the school, which had lots of appeal, but it is not marked.
- Form a public/private partnership: "Residents, friends and organizations for an enduring Mystic".
- Role of institutions in terms of public trust, education, and preservation of environment must be clearly articulated, and not approached from the tourism angle.
- Hire a process person/facilitator, not a personality, to help develop a plan.
- Need for unified signage.

Images to hold

- Views of Mystic from land and sea.
- The Mystic River, drawbridge, downtown buildings and store fronts, captains' houses, ships/boats, Mystic Seaport Museum grounds, Rossie Mill, Elm Grove Cemetery, Olde Mistick Village, Mystic Aquarium and its live animals and exhibits, walk through the woods, old stone walls, Nature Center, Pine Point School – setting and ethos.

Questions

- What are the next steps?
- How do the Labs and the Conference hang together for current and future reference?
- How do the knowledge and geographic connections made during the Labs endure?
- How do we stay in touch and learn best practices from the participants?

Nuggets from the Lab.

- Excellent catalyst and benchmark for our ongoing work in Mystic.
- Great group of Conference participants.
- Good validation of assets; sharp insights into needs and opportunities.

c. Newport: New Development Options for a Historic Destination

Participants: Dan Shilling, Diane Gaede, Munira Anyonge, Lisa Brochu, Bob Billington, Natalie Carter and Lilly Kayamba.

The Situation

Facilitators; Evan Smith, President, of Newport CVB; and Keith Stokes, President, Newport Chamber of Commerce; Jonathan Stevens, Planner, City of Newport.

Newport is in the midst of another transition as it continues to reinvent as a destination, for visitors.

The Lab unfolded in this sequence:

1. Redeveloping a Newport gateway Center. Learning from what went wrong in the first development of combining a Visitors Center with an inter-modal transit hub? How to move forward to re-design an attractive, multi-purpose center?
2. Waste Water Management and the effects on beach tourism. What innovative technology is being applied to help combat the problem of high bacteria counts that can lead to beach closings.
3. The Navy has created surplus land. How to best develop it to benefit the municipality and tourism?

Evan and his team infused into the lab some added surprises from this historic city by the sea.

Lab Results

Strengths

- Impressed by the collaboration in Newport between the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Newport, and the Newport Convention Visitors Bureau.
- The community uses creative solutions for the problems...it's a public conversation.
- Successes are open for everyone to take credit.
- Community leaders are up front and honest about issues and open to new solutions.
- The CVB affirmed that polluted beaches are harming the brand.
- Problem awareness: the three collaborators spelled out the challenges Newport was facing and were willing to tap into the ideas of participants to get solutions.
- Accessibility to the beach is strength for the city of Newport. During the summer season Newport tends to be a "must go place" for local, domestic and international visitors.

- The open space makes it an attractive place for commercial and housing development.
- Most visitors to Newport are day visitors.
- Newport is a charming city with a lot going for it.

Concerns

- The Visitor Center may not be in the right location today, should it be demolished and rebuilt? Should it be reconfigured? Should it be abandoned for a new location?
- Pollution on Newport beaches gives it a bad name hence affecting their brand.
- Parking is a major problem in Newport; too many cars and not sufficient parking available. A valet system is being tested to ease the traffic.
- Narrow roads have proved to be a concern especially during their busiest season (summertime) thus holding up traffic for long hours.
- Lack of local artists is a concern due to their value to the community.
- Poverty in community is not discussed.
- You get dumped from the highway into the city and fly past the visitor's center.
- Some development looks inviting; some doesn't ... How to protect the "real" parts of Newport – the fishing and lobster area.
- Newport has several activities and attractions to offer to their residents and visitors. In the process, you find that these things compete with each other hence bringing about an imbalance. Newport should attempt to balance this by making all offerings more visible.

Creative Tensions

- The beach is a popular attraction. On the downside visitors tend to take over and be in the way of residents.
- There are numerous summer homes for people who don't live in Newport year round so these people are not vested in the community.

Practices to provoke future thinking

- Expand the narrow roads to ease the flow of traffic.
- Involve local artists in decision-making so they feel vested in the community.
- Introduction of a seaweed eater to clean the red tide.

Specific Recommendations

- Change the structure of the Visitor Center to make it accessible and more appealing to the visitors and residents.
- The historical museum doesn't attract traffic so it was suggested that it should be part of the Visitor Center hence making it an Orientation Center where visitors will get a brief introduction of the area before they venture out into different places.
- It was highly recommended that the lobster building should be preserved since it is an authentic part of Newport.
- Invest more in educating the residents and the visiting public about their roles in keeping beaches clean.

- The Agency should undertake a community-wide educational effort that helps reinforce the central theme of the community.
- Interpretive Planner should be consulted when redesigning or putting up a new building for the Visitor Center.

Images of the City to hold

- Newport has always been portrayed as a wealthy place, but the reality on the ground is different. There is poverty in the neighborhoods that is hardly mentioned.
- Newport attracts about 4 million tourists a year and 70% of this number visits the mansions. This is a problem because the tourists don't get to evenly spread out to other historical sites and attractions.

Questions

- What kind of structure and design does the Newport Visitor Center require?
- What type of investments should the town of Newport put on the surplus land that was created by the Navy?

Nuggets from the experience

- Newport Visitor Center should incorporate the Historical Museum and be an orientation center for people visiting Newport.
- Systems should be put in place to reduce pollution on the beaches. These measures will greatly reduce the number of beach closures.
- The waste systems should adapt the latest technology so that they can manage the waste in a more effective way.

d. Providence: Growing the City without Losing its Soul and Character

The Situation

Facilitator was Robert Leaver; with Tour Guides Lynne McCormack, Deb Dormody, Lucy Searle's, and Cliff Wood.

This lab was a slow walk through the old core of downtown visiting with leaders of arts and cultural organizations.

We began with a showcase of some lessons learned. "Get inside the transformation of downtown!"

1. A nearly abandoned old retail core on Westminster Street has become a vital mixed-use experience with cafes, bookstore, restaurants, theatre and people living upstairs. There is an art and culture vibe throughout the downtown.
2. How RISD expanded from its exclusive location on College Hill next to Brown University to become a major partner downtown. How Johnson & Wales' presence downtown helped to keep the core alive in dark times.
3. We need help with: Kennedy Plaza which currently combines a public transit hub, skating rink and a park surrounded by buildings including City hall. The plaza is undergoing a change to become the City's commons - a civic space for all residents.

We want to make a “whole octopus” by connecting the head of the octopus - the plaza - with its legs - the other neighborhoods. A preliminary plan has been developed by Project for Public Spaces. Some early actions have been taken.

Lab Results

Strengths

- Diversity of residents, compared to Portsmouth, NH which is 90% white.
- Walkable place.
- Water Place Park is beautiful.
- Restaurants – visitors report no bad meals.
- Historical architecture/scale of Westminster Street.
- Affordable housing downtown for artists.
- Advanced collaboration among organizations that get work done; leaders we meet were both passionate and doing stuff – often you get passion but not much doing.
- Green spaces (not all cities have them).
- Arts community is visibly present.

Concerns

- No people on the river walk.
- On the River Walk...cobblestones are a barrier – flat surface would allow for sports like runners, rollerblading, skateboarding.
- Except for Westminster Street, everything else felt stark, unwelcoming.
- Washington Street felt more welcoming (despite its rough edges) at street level than the more refined RISD & Water Place Park.
- Need signage for visitors to get around – a new person has absolutely no idea where to go for what; need trolley map, where are the restrooms?
- At Kennedy Place there are a lot of barricades/fences which don't invite people in to meander; fences become keep-off the grass postings; if you need to get out quickly, I can't jump the fence; a sense of no pets allowed.

Creative Tensions

- Students/youth present keep it young and vibrant, but the downside is with so many colleges in the core, property is taken off of the tax roles.
- Night life and clubs make it a cool place but the downside it makes a mess and noise.

Practices to provoke future thinking

- Put flowers in the Water Fire braziers when they are not in use.
- Create a formal commission to shape the future of the capital city.
- Educate kids about civics of the capital and the state with the “Mayor of Providence as teacher”.
- Limited green space: how to make it more visible as a mini-oasis.
- Make the monument in the park a seating area.

Specific Recommendations

- Plant more trees on the streets that don't raise the sidewalk.
- Make public art present such as displaying Kennedy Plaza banners created by local artists or use the KP brand.
- Put the busses underground.
- Take back the street between the two parks and make it part of the park.
- Create shops at Kennedy Plaza so you can pick up something.
- Install bike racks in the Plaza.
- Highlight Providence as a culinary destination..."it's like herding cats because restaurateurs are worst than artists to get together;" create a chef's contest - wiener contest; build an outdoor set for cooking and show it on the Cooking Channel.
- Facilitate more connections among people walking as well as through signage. Let the Historical Society know the Plaza programming; taxi and bus drivers become storytellers. Rent the park for weddings. Busker Day so we engage street vendors.
- Develop revenue sources: "Friends of Kennedy Plaza;" buy a brick, turn plaza banners into bags to buy; buy a button' website revenue; fee for corporate sponsored event.
- The Plaza needs an onsite Visitor's Bureau, even temporary for now...kiosk's...self service touch screens.
- Present better information at T.F. Green Airport to direct people to Providence such as the taxi to Providence is over there with specific directions.
- Aesthetics: pressure GSA to improve the Jersey barriers around the Court House, which, as currently constructed, feel unsafe. Present on the backs of the buildings facing Plaza: Trompe l'Oeil, flowerboxes and murals.

Images of the City to hold

- Providence is still trying to beat down image of not being nice "not a safe place".
- Insiders know "state of mind of residents is negative".
- Think of Providence as the capital city that buoy's up the rest of the state.

Questions

- Where is the public presence of contemporary artists? Two suggestions: 1. Use formal approach like "Overnight Art" which is done in Portsmouth, NH where the art is install, outside, overnight and appears the next morning everywhere in public with words about artists vision with each piece. 2. Install guerilla art by using a mobile phone to send a text message for a swarm of contemporary artists to show up in a public place and put up the art.

Nuggets from the lab experience

- Providence has a unique selling proposition; it went the "other way" with the brand by saying, Providence is a northeast city...a creative capital...fosters independence, deep-thinking.
- It was a learning experience when we walked and talked together.

- Remember for visitors --“Don’t fence me in;” Get rid of so many of the fences around plaza (or decide where they need to strategically stay)...”if it doesn’t work, fix it.” For example, get rid of the fences now because they don’t work.
- “Visually tell me how to get where I want to go” because as a visitor, when I get off the bus, I’m lost...begin with a big map pointing: “you are here.”

e. Westerly: Getting Locals to Become Visitors

Participants of Watch Hill: Grant Simmons (Watch Hill Conservancy), Ed Russell (Watch Hill Fire District), Captain Mark Wright (Westerly Police Department), Perry Kellogg (Seaport Studios), Joann Nicholas (St. Claire Annex) and Mark Szaro (Watch Hill Properties).

Attendees for both sites: Blanche Higgins (Town of Westerly) and Harvey Perry (Westerly Land Trust)

The Situation

Facilitator, Michael Rauh with tour Guide, Lisa Konicki

In the Morning: Experience Watch Hill, a historic seaside resort that features grand seaside homes, pristine beaches, a picturesque lighthouse, and historic carousel. Even though it is “off-season” this beautiful destination is undeniably charming, boasting sweeping views of Narragansett Bay and providing a setting like no other in Rhode Island.

Watch Hill is a residential community with a small business district tucked within, consisting of a collection of fine quality boutiques, art galleries, and outstanding eateries. Watch Hill is struggling with achieving “balance” as residents wish to maintain its historic charm and exclusivity, and protect public access rights to Napatree Point, and developers seek to build condos, update historically significant structures, and attract a specific “high-end” demographic.

Public parking is diminishing rapidly, the greatest single threat to the small businesses. There are several stakeholders in this community with very different priorities and viewpoints about the future of Watch Hill: the Watch Hill Fire District, Watch Hill Conservancy, Watch Hill Business Association, and the residents, of course. How can this community address its critical parking issue while satisfying all groups and maintaining the character and integrity of the area that is known for its unique sense of place?

Lunch: Will feature many specialty foods made right here in town including Italian dishes, “soupy”, beer from Cottrell brewing and wine from Langworthy Farm Bed & Breakfast, as well as Italian pastries and truffles from Hauser Chocolates.

In the Afternoon: Downtown Westerly is a unique, two-state community that serves as the town center. Dozens of buildings are listed on the National register of Historic Places and many stand as fine examples of Westerly’s famed granite industry. The shops are eclectic

and varied, and the restaurants are diverse, from riverside cafes to small delis to fine dining. There is a train station, a public library, a 14-acre strolling park and an active arts community with galleries, studios and performing arts venues. Despite its many fine attributes, downtown has a difficult time attracting some of the thousands of tourists that visit the Watch Hill and Misquamicut beach communities, just a few short miles away. The businesses are challenged, now more than ever, to sustain themselves and establish their district as a year-round destination, much the way neighboring Mystic has. How can we encourage locals and tourists alike to increase patronage of this vital downtown community?

Lab Results

Strengths of Watch Hill:

- Beautiful community that is authentic in that it has grown over time.
- Unspoiled, scenic, waterfront improvements really opened the community to the water.
- A core group exists of passionate, thoughtful people.
- Wealth investment (also a weakness) is evident.
- Many, many visitors (also a weakness).
- Responsive public safety team/police
- Rich in history with attractions such as lighthouse, carousel and beaches.
- 500 paid or public parking spaces.

Concerns/Weaknesses

- Everyone wants a shuttle but funding is an issue. Also visitors tend to resist shuttles and prefer cars.
- Lots of individual action, but not much collective action.
- Wealthy property owners are concerned and engaged but not year-around, while the service sector residents are; big divide between the wealthy residents and the rental business owners; you can “touch the tension” in town; stalemated and stymied.
- Huge issues with parking, which enhances the disconnection between the two dominant groups in town.
- Storefronts are shifting to t-shirts and tourism merchandise as a means of survival does not speak to the resident’s desired image.
- All information is anecdotal and through different filters or lenses – very little hard data or qualitative measurements that can provide for a more informed decision.
- Every successful town has a parking problem and they don’t know that; \$70,000 in parking tickets issued annually provides for a negative impression and demonstrates a clear problem.
- A lack of shared values between the groups makes it stalemated as to how to move forward.
- Need more parking spaces to meet demand. An underground garage would be “dream” solution.

Creative Tensions

- Residents see big problem is removing ugly telephone poles. Businesses see big problem is parking. Neither seems sensitive to the others views.
- Some favor making Bay Street a one-way with diagonal metered parking. This would gain 60-80 more spaces. Others feel this would negatively change the aesthetics.
- Businesses want more evening events and activities to increase sales. Residents want less visitors and traffic.

Practices to provoke future thinking

- Joint meetings with Fire District, WH conservancy, WH Business Assoc. and Chamber should be held bi-annually.
- Survey WH residents to gain ideas of types of business they would support in the village. (Retail? Service oriented?)

Short-Term Ideas for Watch Hill

- Gather data in 2009 and let it help shape the vision for planning and most likely arguing a different case than the one currently presented.
- Develop a bridge between the “he said/she said” divide through the use of research that helps both groups accomplish shared goals.
- Rethink parking: Metered parking can be done aesthetically. The current 10-week season is not enough time to make money. Consider: angle and circulars. Explore creative options for parking – many ideas were floated including carving out more effective (and attractive) parking space from the existing space; looking at parking pay stations as a way to be more proactive and less reactive to the parking issue; for future developments, requiring a percentage of public parking spaces (negotiate with the hotel for this although planning has been complete); examine pay spaces at nearby churches and develop “walking paths” to go from those spaces to the beaches, freeing up the waterfront spaces for shopping/dining customers; shuttle employees and not visitors from the high school; exploring town acquisition of land to build in underground parking if viable.
- For business development work in advance with merchants to grow the shoulder seasons and extend the season but have enough stores open for critical mass necessary. This could significantly contribute to the bottom line, and stores that are not weatherized could still be closed before winter. More affluent shoppers – and older shoppers – tend to travel in shoulder seasons.

Participants of Downtown Westerly: Emma Palzere – Rae (Chorus of Westerly), David & Beth Jepson (Granite Theatre), Lynn Anderson (Artists Cooperative Gallery), Sandi Gold (Artists Cooperative Gallery), Nancy Creaturo (River Terrace Building Owner), Bob Priolo (Downtown Travel), Wendy Carr (Prime Time Café), Sen. Dennis Alguie (RI Senator) and First Selectman Ed Haberek (Town of Stonington).

Strengths of Downtown Westerly:

- Charming architecture and streetscape with many facades renovated.
- Waterway that runs through town.
- Unbelievable civic engagement – admirable in every way.
- Watch Hill Land Trust (also a concern – see weaknesses below).
- City park, public buildings, etc., that add much charm.
- Great cultural offerings through artists, choir, theater, more.
- Outstanding culinary diversity – Thai, Chinese, Mexican, Italian, etc.
- Engaged business groups – Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Business who resides/works downtown and Association knows the issues.
- Responsive State Senator.

Weaknesses of Downtown Westerly

- Some blight still exists...Spot development needed.
- Private ownership of civic institutions creates a disconnection with the people; disconnect between arts and business.
- Huge disconnect in the Town between what it does and what the local non-profits do; Westerly government is almost disengaged, which is a crime.
Development/progress happens despite lack of Town Leadership and participation, not because of it.
- Watch Hill Land Trust has a great vision and has the opportunity to do much to correct some of the challenges (e.g., waterfront, blight, and redevelopment) and is acting as a CDC, but it is doing it alone, buying land in a vacuum and should engage more stakeholders.
- Did a big “thing” in the 1990s – what’s the next step? Need planning.
- Some resentment/distrust over failed Riverwalk project/money wasted.
- Store owners do not coordinate hours for benefit of customers.
- Not enough “downtown loyalty” by residents

Ideas for Downtown Westerly

- Re-instating a part-time downtown business/development manager might help bridge the gaps, open up communications and assist in the marketing of the various business constituent groups and bring the city to the table with local businesses and the arts.
- Waterfront development – need to revisit this but look at creative, new ways for options and ideas rather than just a traditional river walk.
- Define and develop a better marketing initiative that encompasses a wide swath in the city, from the arts to local restaurants. Seek a foundation grant to support the initiative.
- Look into better way-finding to help visitors. More signage needed.
- Market more with Mystic Seaport so visitors make two stops.
- Updated study of the parking in downtown needed. Is shortage perception or reality?

- Incentives needed to encourage property owners to develop upper levels into housing.

Friday Evening...10-17-08

Hope Artist Village

Pawtucket, RI

Sponsored by Boston University

An evening with Rhode Island born musician, Susan Cowsill

The location was chosen because it is a textile mill conversion that now houses several artist spaces, incubator business, commercial activities, social clubs and housing.

Susan Cowsill, originally from Rhode Island performed with the nationally known Cowsills. Her husband, Russ Broussard performed, as did Fred Presley.

A traditional Rhode Island spaghetti and meatball dinner was served.

Local music, location, food and wine were all chosen because of their connection to the place that exemplifies Civic Tourism at its best.

4. Taking Action for Creating Civic Places

Saturday morning...10-18-08

Participants gathered to reflect on the whole conference, culled out nuggets of learning, and identified what would be the next steps to evolve civic tourism as a theory and a practice. The morning began with a poem by Mary Oliver who lives on Cape Cod.

4.1 The Summer Day

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean
The one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes?
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver

4.2 Laboratory Learning Cafes

Reflecting on our lab experience, with civic tourism and making whole places the foci: what did we learn? What do we want to learn next? Make your contributions in the form of a nugget...A question...An image...

a. What did we learn?

Too often there are actors who are not doers. We need to develop a culture of experienced doers that hold community values and lead. In our lab places, who coordinates the powers that be? What do you do when you have too many leaders, each protecting their turf? Collaborative leadership requires equitable distribution regarding vision, input and receptivity, which leads to asking more questions?

If the story of a place is complete, where does tourism fit in?

We saw underdevelopment in disenfranchised communities. And, at the same time, there was over-development with no control or collaboration or participatory planning.

The community has to be consulted on major decisions before they bring in developers and pursue development in the region. Newport lacks regional planning. How does Newport re-brand the product of Newport?

Hunger for, or lack thereof to develop. This hunger must = patience and the ability to determine the type of development that best fits the place.

Civic engagement is an ongoing process – it is never-ending and needs to be kept fresh: how do we do that? Avoid ebbs and flows.

b. What do we want to learn next?

Do we change the tourists or the destinations? What's the point? Back up and find the mission, goal or primary theme.

How to reach niche tourists: cultural heritage, civil war buffs, Las Vegas repeaters and everyone else. How do we reach them? Do we want to? The US is provincial and is that O.K?

What is the new story of place...allow it to evolve?

There is the mass tourist to provide local flavor opportunities; go after a MIX of users: Comfort seekers – experiential. We need the zealots, but call them “leaders and initiators.”

c. Definitions & Role

As someone who did not attend the 1st conference, I feel like I still don't know what civic tourism is about.

Place-making = tourism. Is civic tourism meant to be a noun or a verb? civic tourism is more about creating the place and less about the actions of attracting tourists.

Tourism professionals are: community builders, makers, and shapers. How do we get back to what we are?

The beauty of civic tourism is that it's not easily defined! It's about place. We don't have a brand. Doing interpretation and place-making requires group therapy and we are not skilled at it.

We have to understand the difference between visitor methodologies vs. market segments.

d. What we want to create

Civic tourism is a way to go about doing our work. civic tourism is a conversation with everyone: community tourism...GEO tourism...sustainable tourism...civic tourism...place-making tourism. CT is a conversation to look at local issues and concerns. Look at tourism not only as place-building, but as nation-building. Look at community assets as something to unify as a theme.

Civic Tourism is community development. Our residents are part of our community. Our visitors are part of our community too!

I work for tourism, but (I am always apologizing)... it is more than heads and beds; tourism has to become a major player of creating places. The tourists cannot control your community; instead only what you allow. Citizens are the experience that tourists come to experience.

Ask the question: Is tourism even right for the community? It is also the absence of tourism in the community.

Saturday over lunch

4.3 Learning Café on the overall conference

a. What did we learn?

Collaboration makes a difference

Understand the difference between managers vs. leaders. Different qualities of leadership: situational leadership, like what Churchill did when he stepped in during WW II and it fit for the times (he was not as good as a leader after the war), vs. sustainable leadership for the long haul? Further, understand the diffusion of power.

The power of collaboration in Newport, Rhode Island is very impressive – key leaders talk and work together.

Bring together the business community...government...friends' groups...non-governmental organizations (NGO's)...municipal staffs and the community groups. In effect, work with communities in a more inclusive manner.

Engage the community

Involving the community, the public, in decision-making creates ownership. Test ideas in the street!!! Get the people engaged in vision creation and implementation. Say: I don't know when you don't know. Community is about knocking on doors and talking to people. Stand up and invite the community to help you address issues and opportunities. Get the issues are on the table. Who is in the room matters?

It is useful to do community-planning projects with a holistic approach and networking.

Know the new story

It sounds like all the labs need to step back and recognize their main theme or story and decide what they want the impact to be!

How do we tell the stories? Newport is changing their brand from colonial to current and that is impressive.

Parking, parking, parking...70% of visitors go one place to park: how to disperse them?

Do not need to help the “big guys” in tourism... not big guys – but it is based on true experience of quality...that’s how you satisfy the local shops and residents and all the tourists.

A multi-use experience in a destination is needed: McDonalds's – mass tourism, local chain/B&B, authenticity, street vendors.

Do mass-tourists want a civic or real experience? How can we avoid being elitists? Museums struggled with this – not too successfully – in the 1980's and 1990's. What can we learn from them? Differences prevail: some people like authentic travel and some like to let their hair down when traveling, and then all those in between. There's a lack of perception of what's authentic. Authenticity can be ass – backwards. Politics is everywhere. Is “authenticity” the proper word?

Tourism experiences are in levels. How can we meet all those needs in one community? Those who need homogenized experiences vs. partnering – can we get these two to hangout together?

Product development is essential!! Process before product and it never ends!!

Understand development

No leadership will lead to crappy development. How do you turn down development – when you are starving for money?

Zoning needs input from residents...accepting ideas/suggestions – ready to listen and incorporate it to fit.

Create HOPE...hopeful opportunity for the equality of people. Bridge the gap between tourism and community development.

Evolving tourism or back to origins?

Tourism should aid the betterment of society. How does civic tourism differ from “good tourism”? Is it a distraction from the principles of sustainable tourism? Should we just concentrate on making tourism better?

Educate local people, citizens or ambassadors, tourists, appreciators.

Get beyond: "I work for tourism but...."

We need sustainable development – mining/farming, retail, tourism, and fishing. With the prospect of more limited resources, we are going to have to prove a more grounded return on those dollars. De-politicize tourism funding in the future.

Tourism professionals need to lead the future and become community psychologists like Robert Leaver of New Commons. Include learning group therapy skills at the next civic tourism conference.

Create sustainable tourism communities where there is both whole community place-making and civic tourism. Get rid of the term tourism... use place-making. Concern: if we take tourism out of the equation, we get only seekers and not those with power to make change.

b. What do we want to learn next?

Authenticity is subjective. Reality is subjective. In a post-modern world, authenticity is context driven.

How do we create more leadership amongst the community?

Learn not how to do tourism planning in a new way, but community-building and leadership-development that will bring citizens into the process = empowerment! Ownership! Nurture younger generation.

Sustainable leadership = anti-leadership. Work with the community not for, or to, or at.

Leadership comes from inclusive civic power that derives from citizens having a voice and educating all to remember that the place matters. Leader becomes trust-builders and collaborative = sustainability for the long-term.

How do understand, homogenous and the wealthy? Understand the trade-offs of over-control vs. no development.

c. In what ways have we better defined Civic Tourism – What is it in your mind now?

Tourism through place-making, that is geo and sustainable. CT as a verb.

Identify tourism as something a part of you (like its part of your tribe) so that you embrace it.

Dollars = Civic Tourism.

Come to Kenya where tourism is viewed as foreign.

Tourism has not made the case that it has the potential!

Future of civic tourism is to become political – we become the mayors and legislature so we create policy.

Tourism leaders should “invest” in Education/School Board. civic tourism should teach civic education in the education system like local history, etc. We should teach the classes.

The word tourism...eco...cultural... geo... still isn't respected. How can it survive and become valuable conversation with community leadership engaged in politics – action?

Work with the community, not for the community...We are “tourism therapists”...“community therapists”.

Saturday Afternoon Closing Thoughts

4.4 Closing Panel

To close the conference, on Saturday morning, October 18, 2008, we asked Graham Miller, Sam Mendlinger, and Dan Shilling to share some closing reflections:

Graham's main research interest is in the forces that enable and prevent the drive towards a more sustainable tourism industry, publishing the first book to address the monitoring of sustainable tourism in 2005. Graham has just completed a major study for the UK government Department for Environment on public awareness of sustainable tourism and leisure. Other recent clients have included the Department of Trade and Industry, EU, Association of British Insurers, National Audit Office, TUIAG and Ipsos-Mori. Graham is a consultant and qualified accreditation officer for the United Nations World Tourism Organization and their Tourism Education Quality Program, while the University of Surrey currently holds the chair of the Education Council of the UNWTO. Graham is a judge for the World Travel & Tourism Council's prestigious Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, which seek to establish the tourism companies making the greatest contribution to sustainable tourism each year. Graham sits on the editorial board of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, and is the Tourism editor of the journal Tourism and Hospitality Research. Graham is vice-chair for the Research Ethics Committee of Hammersmith Hospital, and a member of the Faculty of Management Ethics Committee at the University of Surrey.

Dr. Mendlinger is a dual American-Israeli citizen whose agricultural research has resulted in economic development in rural communities in Asia, Africa, and South America. He holds two patents for seed cultivation, and has numerous international publications and grants. His current research and teaching interests include responsible and sustainable economic growth in under-developed countries.

Dr. Mendlinger oversees the Economic Development and Tourism Management concentration for the Master of Science in Administrative Studies and teaches courses in statistics, culture and development, and economic sustainability in tourist destinations.

Dr. Dan Shilling has researched, written about, and practiced alternative forms of tourism since the early 1990's. In 2001, he received the Arizona Office of Tourism "Person of the Year" award. The former director of the Arizona Humanities Council, Dan has received numerous awards for his work in community development.

a. What do we now know about Civic Tourism?

Focus on helping people with parts of the market that need help or are forgotten. It is about a communitarian ethos, more than individualism. How does civic tourism fit it into overall tourism? Graham Miller

We have to move beyond our inferior feelings because we have lost the game to hospitality. It is not about traveling, its people, place, nation, and development. Sam Mendlinger

Not just talking to...it is about engaging people with labs and cafes as we have done in CT2. It is pride of place. Reach out and talk to tourism and economic development people (the eco and geo people get it). Don Shilling

Before the next national gathering, target some geographical areas to develop deeper ties with and practice civic tourism (Suggested from the audience).

b. What's next for Civic Tourism?

A few thoughts from Dr Sam Mendlinger from Boston University, Dr. Graham Miller from the University of Surrey and Dr. Dan Shilling from Arizona State University

"Learn to differentiate ourselves from hospitality." Sam Mendlinger

"Good solid examples of civic tourism in practice to show that this is what we mean...this is current... the best practice. Labs are a nascent example of an evolving practice."

Graham Miller

"Bolder Leadership: in Winslow, Arizona, the tourism guy couldn't get the Mayor to hear it so he led a recall vote against the Mayor. He is now the Mayor. Spend a month in Prescott, Arizona next summer, at the Institute, where you get paid \$3,200 to come." Dan Shilling

Conclusion

The Conference came to a close with Dr. Robert Billington, Conference Chair thanking participants for the robust conversation and he encouraged them to continue the discussion since this is the future of this dynamic industry.

He reminded the attendees that the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory material stands ready to communities that wish to apply the sustainable tourism principles that the Blackstone Valley has used through its existence.

The formal conference closed at 1:30pm with several participants touring the Blackstone Valley for the weekend.

For more information please contact the following organizations:

Dr. Robert Billington
Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory
Blackstone Valley Visitor Center
175 Main Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860
www.Sustainabletourismlab.com
800 454 2882

Robert Leaver
New Commons
www.newcommons.com
401 351 7110