



PHILADELPHIA (UNITED STATES)
The President's House and Philadelphia's Welcome America Festival

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Tourism is a powerful tool for communicating Philadelphia's heritage to local and global audiences and for encouraging public ownership and stewardship of our heritage assets. Collaboration has been key in ensuring that the way in which we communicate the city's heritage is truly representative of all of the people who live here. The city's various heritage tourism initiatives involve engaging multiple stakeholders and providing opportunities for active participation of community members in the interpretation and presentation of Philadelphia's heritage.

One example of a collaborative tourism initiative is the city's annual celebration of Independence Day. The multiple-day Welcome America Festival consists of over 50 free multicultural events held throughout the city and region, capped off by an outdoor concert and fireworks display on July 4th. The idea, however, is not simply to provide entertainment for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who attend, but to put Philadelphia's cultural diversity on display through the community organizations that epitomize it. This community-presented programming represents a qualitatively different approach in engaging tourists and provides a unique opportunity for community partners to take ownership over how Philadelphia's heritage is presented to visitors. City museums offer free admission, local organizations and businesses partake in street fairs, and local musicians and performers are featured entertainers. Many of the events are held in neighborhoods outside the historic center and neighborhood cultural sites are promoted on the same level as internationally-known institutions.

The National Park Service (NPS) manages many of Philadelphia's heritage sites, including the UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site of Independence Hall. The NPS works collaboratively with the City of Philadelphia and local partners to provide authoritative representations of the city's and the nation's heritage to a variety of audiences. One example of how the NPS ensures that official heritage narratives are inclusive and representative of the local community is the open-air exhibition "The President's House: Freedom and Slavery in the Making of a New Nation." The cre-

Photos: Paul Loftland for PHLCVB and Global Philadelphia Association



ation of this exhibition was the result of a collaborative effort between the NPS and local community organizations who advocated for the President's House site as a place focused on telling the stories of the African American slaves who had lived there. This inclusion is especially significant because 43% of Philadelphia's current population is African American.

As the President's House experience and Philadelphia's Welcome America Festival demonstrate, communicating a city's heritage to visitors in a truly inclusive way requires collaboration across a variety of sectors, including public, private, and non-profit.

Watch the presentation

Copy the link or scan the QR code on your phone to watch the full presentation.

https://youtu.be/F8Y_J6vQoYs

