



# 2012 Annual Report



# Historic Wethersfield Tourism Commission

## 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

### History and Mission

The Wethersfield Tourism Commission was created by ordinance in March of 1999, as an outgrowth of the Wethersfield Festival. The success of the Festival demonstrated the potential for development of Historic Wethersfield as a tourist destination. The adopted mission of the Commission is “To promote and encourage tourism to make visitors to the New England area aware of Wethersfield’s heritage and it’s historic and scenic sites, to coordinate a year round calendar of events and promotions, and to assist in the marketing of any product promoting Wethersfield.”

### Programs

In support of this mission the Commission has established a number of ongoing programs:

- The maintenance of a tourism specific website/internet presence to promote the Historic Wethersfield brand [www.historicwethersfield.org](http://www.historicwethersfield.org)
- Design and distribution of a high quality color brochure to promote the sites and attractions found in Wethersfield.
- A marketing and media campaign to promote the brand through press releases, newspaper, magazine and television promotions.
- Maintenance of a year round calendar of events on the website.
- Visitor inquiry information packets for distribution to interested potential visitors.
- Partnerships and coordination with State, Regional and local tourism stakeholders.
- Support of special events and projects designed to improve the visitor experience.

### Benefits

Heritage tourism continues to be a growing niche market segments in the travel industry today. People who engage in historic and cultural activities spend more, do more, and stay longer than other types of U.S. travelers. The continued development of tourism in Wethersfield will bring more visitors with money to spend in business located along the Silas Deane Highway and Berlin Turnpike as well as in Old Wethersfield. Increased tourism will not only support our local historic sites and museums and increase business, but it will help to reduce future increases in the heavy tax burdens that fall upon our businesses and residential property owners.

### Membership

The Award Winning Commission consists of the following volunteers representing the following stakeholders:

Shireen Aforismo -	Chamber of Commerce
Geraldine Munroe -	Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism
Dorcas McHugh -	Economic Development & Improvement Commission
Charles Ford -	Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers Association
Charles Forsdick -	Resident at Large
Chris Traczyk -	Silas Deane Highway Business Community
Katie Sullivan -	Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum
Elaine St. Onge -	Wethersfield Historical Society
Carol Hall -	Alternate
Jeff Kotkin -	Council Liaison

The Commission receives staff support from Peter Gillespie, Director of Planning and Economic Development.

The Commission continued many of its ongoing programs and activities and initiated several new initiatives. Specifically, the Commission reports on the following accomplishments:

## Website-Social Media

- The Historic Wethersfield website continues to be a primary tool to promote the Town to prospective visitors. The average monthly number of site visits has increased to 4,100 up from 2,500 in 2010 and the annual total of site visits has topped 174,000 this is an increase of 79% visitors when compared to 2010.
- Our webmaster distributes a monthly newsletter promoting upcoming events. This electronic newsletter is sent out to more than 200 contacts and distributed to the Board of Education for distribution in the schools.
- Tourism has recently been hosting the Farmers Market and the Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers on its website consolidating visitor friendly information in one place.
- Tourism started a Facebook page in 2010 and continues to use Facebook as a way to promote events and activity in Wethersfield.
- In 2011 the Commission in partnership with Madden Media developed an electronic iBrochure available through the Tourism website.
- Completed filming and production of Tourism DVD., posted on website and on YouTube.
- The Commission continues to respond to information requests submitted via the website.

## Brochures/Promotional Material

- The Commission received a grant to create rack cards and postcards. These cost effective double sided cards will be a quick snapshot of attractions and will steer people to our website. The post cards will enable Tourism to respond to requests for information quickly with reduced postage costs. Design, production and distribution of a greener, cost effective promotional piece. The new collateral will be a 4" X 9" rack card that directs interest to our web site for more information.
- We continued our relationship with CTM Media Group to assist with the distribution of 20-25,000 of our brochure at Hotels and Visitor locations along the Interstate 91 and 95 corridors throughout the State.
- Through a grant and with the assistance of the Pita Group the Commission created a new ad for use in magazines and promotional pieces.

## Media

- Tourism with Co-op Marketing grant from the State of CT Department on Culture and Tourism again participated in the Connecticut Getaway Guide created to promote Connecticut as a vacation destination. The Guide has been designed in a glossy magazine format inserted into select CT, NY and NJ newspapers. The print circulation is 1,400,000 with readership of 5,000,000. The publication is also distributed to AAA offices nationwide.
- Tourism received 7,000 requests during our 2010 participation in the Getaway Guide and over 8,000 in 2011.

## Visitor Promotions

- Tourism has been hosting regular meetings of a Stakeholders group. The meetings keep members apprised of individual activities as well as providing a review of upcoming events and programs. Since the advent of the structured meetings, there have been several complementary events including Holidays on Main, Spring encampments, and Fall/Halloween events. The group regularly shares calendars, discusses opportunities for "piggybacking" on events and shared marketing.

## Special Projects

- Continued membership with the Greater Hartford Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- Continuing relationship with the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism resulting in 3 grant awards totaling \$40,000.
- Continued designation as a Preserve America community.

- Farmers Market –a collaboration of Economic Development Improvement Commission continues to be a successful seasonal attraction for residents and visitors. This past winter the Market hosted an abbreviated winter market.
- As part of the implementation of the Preserve America Old Wethersfield Master Plan wayfinding signage design work has been completed, a contractor selected and with the first stage of sign installation is underway.

## Benchmarks

- Through the combination of all of the Commissions media and public relations efforts in 2011 over 5 million impressions were generated for potential visitors.

## Outlook For 2012/2013

- Continue to implement recommendations of Old Wethersfield Master Plan.
- Low cost- no cost implementation of collaborative strategic marketing plan with WDS and WHS.
- The development of an electronic database for expanded distribution of newsletters and e-mail blasts to potential visitors.
- Through a State grant the Commission in partnership with the Town will be redesigning it's website presence in 2012.
- Complete the installation of a significant portion of the wayfinding signage program.
- Tourism recently announced a community Photo Contest to expand the library of promotional pictures that can be used to highlight and promote the town. Winners will be announced in May/June 2012.

We appreciate the Town Council's continued support of your Award Winning Tourism Commission and its efforts to promote tourism and generate economic development