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Program Information

Locality **Prince William County**

Program Title **Prince William County Historical Marker Guide Update**

Program Category **Community & Economic Development**

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Prince William County

2014 VACo Achievement Awards Application

Prince William County Historical Commission Marker Guide Update

OVERVIEW

The challenge was to update the Prince William County Historical Commission's Marker Guide to make it more visible, interesting and more attractive to visitors so they'll use it to visit historical markers throughout the county. Prince William County is rich in cultural resources and tourism is an important tool in our economic development efforts.

With collaboration among county planning office staff, county communications staff, county historical commission members/citizens and an outside printing company, a new, more contemporary version of the Prince William County Historical Commission's Marker Guide was developed. The updated version is more visually appealing, more colorful and provides logical routes through the county to visit the historical marker locations.

The Prince William County Historical Commission (Commission) is composed of 16 citizen volunteers appointed by the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (Board). The Commission was organized more than four decades ago to advise the Board in its efforts to identify, preserve, protect and promote Prince William County's historical sites, artifacts, buildings and events.

Members review land development applications and make recommendations regarding their impact on cultural resources; produce publications related to local history; provide input on the installation of historical highway markers; propose properties to be classified as County Registered Historic Sites; conduct tours; and award community service certificates. The planning office provides assistance to the Commission in its investigations, preparation of reports and as otherwise requested.

As part of its mission, the Commission oversees the installation of highway historical markers. Commission sponsored markers have been erected since 1974 and other markers were put in place many years before that. Related to this effort to promote the history of Prince William County is the production, by the Commission, of a free historical marker guide (guide). This guide lists historical markers throughout the county including state, city, county and privately funded markers.

Over the last three decades there have been four editions of the guide and numerous reprints of each edition. During this time the publication, aside from the cover, was in black and white on plain paper and was basically an index. It included a numbered list of markers and a map of the county labeled with these numbers. The fourth edition, in 2008, included text for 88 markers, listings of markers without text and a map crowded with numbered tags.

In early 2013 the Commission determined it was time for a new edition of the guide as copies of the 2008 edition were almost gone and more markers had been erected. This was an ideal time to revisit the goals for the guide and develop an updated version designed to appeal to an expanded audience.

Over the next few months, planning office staff met with Commission members; planning office staff met with communications office staff; communications office staff, planning office staff and Commission members met and collaborated to establish goals for the program resulting in the creation of a new and innovative look for the guide. The design criteria included a publication that would fit in your hand, easy to read, functional graphics, a rearrangement of the information and improvements to the quality of the product.

County staff, working with an outside printing company, constructed a more contemporary, eye-catching and attractive document that more than met the desired goals. Funding to pay the printing costs of $5, 174.oo was provided by the Commission and the rest of the associated costs were county staff related.

The 2013 edition of the Prince William County Historical Marker Guide is divided into seven colored coded historical marker corridors each with its own take on local history.   It features a color coded map for each corridor as well as an overview map of the county outlining each of the corridors. The publication is in color on glossy paper; folds out to four times its hand held size; has a larger, easier to read font and includes text for 95 historical markers.

This innovative design rearranged the information in the guide to present marker locations and text along logically aligned/determined transportation corridors allowing

promotion of particular periods of history. The increased functionality of the maps encourages citizens, visitors and tourists to explore the county by visiting the historical marker locations. The new guide is colorful; attracting people to view it and expand the audience to appreciate the history in Prince William County.

Positive feedback on the new guide has been received from Commission members and citizens. Copies of the guide are regularly requested. This new guide is a valuable asset with its brighter, bolder design and innovative layout. It highlights the quality of life available to residents of the county and encourages tourism at the county's many historical sites.