

*Principle Four:
Focus on Quality and Authenticity*

**BEST PRACTICE: Lancaster County's
Authenticity Guidelines**

With the increase in popularity – and product availability – of cultural heritage tourism, destinations must seek strategies to demonstrate the point of difference and excellence in the experience offered to visitors. Several strategies have been introduced to define and qualify authenticity, visitor services, and integrity of product.



The Role of Authenticity

Lancaster, Pennsylvania was one of the first U.S. destinations to create authenticity guidelines to qualify heritage sites and attractions. The county defined an *authentic resource* as a site, service or event that reflects a community's (cultural) heritage. A resource shows evidence of authenticity through the survival of features that existed during its period of significance, and through its association with historic events, persons, architectural or engineering design, or technology. It is not necessary for a resource to retain all of the features that it had during its period of significance, but it must retain the features that enable it to convey all of its historic identity or its relationship to a cultural tradition.¹

The county created different criteria for each type of *authentic resource*: site, service and event.

A **Heritage Site** is a landscape, streetscape, building, object, or collection of objects that meet the Authenticity Guidelines established by Lancaster County Heritage. In order to be eligible for Heritage Site designation, a resource must also be open to the general public with regular established hours, and must directly interpret some aspect of Lancaster County's heritage. For a landscape, streetscape, building, structure or object, evidence of authenticity is strengthened by listing on, or eligibility for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places. For an object or collection of objects, evidence of authenticity is strengthened by interpretation that meets professional curatorial standards.

A **Heritage Service** is a research facility, tour, lodging facility or dining facility that meets the Authenticity Guidelines established by Lancaster County Heritage. In order to be eligible for Heritage Service designation, a resource must also be open to the general public with regular established hours, and must directly interpret some aspect of Lancaster County's heritage.

Authentic interpretation conveys information about a community's cultural heritage through an accurate, objective portrayal of people, sites, places or events. This information must be made available to visitors through signage, printed materials or other media, exhibits, or tours.

A **Heritage Event** is an activity that meets the Authenticity Guidelines established by Lancaster County Heritage. In order to be eligible for Heritage Event designation, an activity must also be open to the general public, must be scheduled on a regular basis at least once annually, and must directly interpret some aspect of Lancaster County's heritage.

A Heritage Event is classified as one of two types:

- 1) A **Traditional Heritage Event** is a commonplace activity that is rooted in local culture. This activity must demonstrate a clear relationship to the cultural tradition that is being expressed, and must be promoted accordingly.
- 2) An **Interpretive Heritage Event** is a staged activity reflecting cultural tradition and designated to be educational. This activity must clearly indicate the historic time period, season of the year, and location being interpreted, and must be promoted accordingly.

Resources

Authenticity Guidelines: Lancaster County Planning Commission, 50 North Duke Street, Box 83480, Lancaster, PA 17608-3480 Tel: 717-299-8333 Contact: Scott W. Standish, Chief of Long-Range Planning
<http://www.co.lancaster.pa.us/heritage/cwp/view.asp?a=11&q=512158&heritageNav=164451>

(Footnotes)

¹ Lancaster, Pennsylvania Authenticity Guidelines

