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Contact: Lancaster-York Heritage Region

Mark Platts, President

Jonathan Pinkerton, Deputy Director

Phone: 717-252-0229

Fax: 717-252-1224

Email: info@lyhr.org

Web: www.StoriesoftheLand.com

Rivertownes PA USA

Claire Storm, President

Phone: 717-684-2489

Email: kinder@dejazzd.com Web: www.rivertownes.org



Building Communities, Bridging Heritage

River Towns Heritage Development Strategy Unveiled

Columbia, PA – The Lancaster-York Heritage Region and Rivertownes PA USA have released the River Towns Heritage Development Strategy, a plan that recognizes new economic opportunities by celebrating heritage resources in the historic Susquehanna River communities of Marietta, Columbia, Wrightsville and surrounding area. The announcement came at a news conference today hosted by Columbia Mayor Leo Lutz inside the Historic Columbia Market House.

“The river towns and surrounding areas along the magnificent Susquehanna River share a history rich in heritage and culture and have always relied on the river for prosperity,” stated Claire Storm, President of Rivertownes PA USA. “They also have a tremendous potential to improve the economy of the area through heritage tourism. The River Towns Heritage Development Strategy offers a well-defined plan for reaching that potential by improving the quality of life for our residents and providing a unique and enjoyable experience for visitors,” Claire Storm said.

Today, the Susquehanna River’s improving health, growing importance as a recreational resource and status as one of the region’s key assets are increasingly being recognized. Mark Platts, President of the Lancaster-York Heritage Region said, “As large-scale preservation efforts and heritage development initiatives are occurring on both banks of the Susquehanna, our river towns are the prime gateway to the Lower Susquehanna River Greenway. Implementation of this Strategy for improving the physical and economic condition of the River Towns will help these communities capitalize on their strong historical character and setting while continuing to preserve the River and adjoining landscape.”

The Strategy identifies five key goals to enhance the River Towns:

1. Position the River Towns as thriving gateways to the natural beauty and recreation amenities of the Susquehanna.
2. Strengthen connections between the towns and the river, physically and in terms of community identity.
3. Bring the centers of these historic towns back to life.
4. Retain distinctions between the River Towns and the surrounding agricultural and natural landscape.
5. Heighten understanding of the history and heritage of the River Towns.

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Background: In 2004 the Lancaster-York Heritage Region, working with Rivertownes PA USA and a special advisory committee, initiated a process to create a River Towns Heritage Development Strategy involving local residents, with a consultant team led by Mary Means & Associates of Alexandria, VA and Murphy & Dittenhafer of York. “One of the strengths of the Strategy is the participation and involvement of local residents, businesses, elected officials and organizations,” said Jonathan Pinkerton, Deputy Director of the Lancaster-York Heritage Region. “Each community has unique characteristics and identifiable priorities. Working together and bridging the River, we are able to position this region as the next great destination for heritage and outdoor tourism.”

In addition to researching, examining and analyzing existing resources and current economic conditions and trends, the Strategy creates a vision for the region over the next five to ten years that is compatible with many existing efforts. In essence, it is a framework for collaborative action. The Strategy offers recommendations for strengthening the River Towns’ collective competitive advantage while building community pride.

More information about the River Towns Heritage Development Strategy is available online at www.StoriesoftheLand.com. Click on the River Towns Heritage Development Strategy icon.

Funding for the River Towns Heritage Development Strategy was provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Pennsylvania Heritage Areas Program, and the County of Lancaster, Rivertownes PA USA, Borough of Marietta, Borough of Columbia, Borough of Wrightsville, York County Community Foundation and other private sources.

The Lancaster-York Heritage Region is a non-profit organization based on the Susquehanna River that helps identify, preserve, interpret and promote the rich heritage and culture of York and Lancaster Counties. For more information about our mission and programs please visit www.StoriesoftheLand.com.

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