



EVERGREEN HERITAGE CENTER CONSORTIUM FEASIBILITY STUDY

Summary of Results

Prepared by
The Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation, November 2009

The Evergreen Heritage Center (EHC), located on 130 acres of “Federal Hill” in the heart of Allegany County, is an historic Maryland estate that pre-dates the Revolutionary War. The focal point of the EHC is a 200 year old white mansion and adjacent barn that have been on the Maryland Historical Trust inventory of historic properties since 1976 and were opened as a museum in 1993. The EHC also includes over 100 acres of managed forest, an historic walking trail, and beautifully landscaped grounds, all in a picturesque location bordering the Great Allegheny Passage and Western Maryland Scenic Railway. The EHC is ten minutes from the town of **Frostburg**, twenty minutes from the city of **Cumberland**, and roughly two hours from either Washington D.C., Baltimore, or Pittsburgh.

In 2008, the **Frostburg State University (FSU) Foundation**, in partnership with **FSU, Allegany College of Maryland (ACM), Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS), and the Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation**, applied for and was awarded a grant by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to conduct a Feasibility Study that would focus on the viability of forming and sustaining a consortium that would leverage the Evergreen Heritage Center to create a self-sustaining indoor/outdoor learning facility in support of their shared missions in education. This pamphlet summarizes the results of that Study and follow-up to date.

THE NEED, THE OPPORTUNITY FOR COLLABORATION, AND THE APPROACH

According to the most recent statistics published by the ARC, the **socioeconomic status of Allegany County** is far below that of Appalachia or the United States overall. Specifically, Allegany County has a higher level of unemployment and poverty (14.8%) than both Appalachia and the U.S., and a lower per capita income (only \$22,703). In summary, due to the economic status of their families, many of the region’s children and youth are often deprived of opportunities that can make a difference in their lives now and in the future when they become adults and enter the job market to provide for themselves and their families.

The Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) public charity, is dedicated to utilizing indoor/outdoor learning to provide these young people with the hands-on knowledge and tools by which to break the cycle of poverty. To achieve that goal, the Foundation has built a consortium of members from the region’s academic, art, and public service communities to collaborate in leveraging the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Evergreen Heritage Center, as well as its members’ expertise, to develop an indoor/outdoor learning center and offer young people the opportunity to gain hands-on knowledge of how to sustain themselves and the environment..

ARC is another key member of this partnership effort, which aligns with ARC’s goals of increasing job opportunities and per capita income in Appalachia, strengthening the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy, and developing and improving Appalachian infrastructure to make the region competitive. **Other supporters** include the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Senators **Mikulski and Cardin**, U.S. Congressman **Bartlett**, Maryland Senator Edwards, Maryland Delegate Kelly, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, the Tri County Council of Western Maryland, the Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council, the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute, the Allegany Arts Council, and the nearby towns of Frostburg and Mount Savage.

The **approach to the Study** was to have the partners define potential learning opportunities utilizing the EHC and to hire an independent consultant to conduct a market assessment, define potential uses that can help subsidize the education programs, compile all of the results, and develop a set of recommendations. The Study began in September 2008 after the ARC grant award, and was completed in August 2009.

PARTNER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Together, the Study partners identified over 100 courses, science camps, and projects that can leverage the Center for hands-on learning:

Frostburg State University (FSU) identified **102 existing courses** that could leverage the EHC to provide hands-on learning opportunities for as many as **7000 students over five years**. Each of these opportunities requires its students to produce professional quality work products that can be added to student portfolios or resumes. Examples include the arts (paintings and illustrations of native plants), biology (studies of EHC plants, animals, soil, and water sources), business (evaluation of “green” business opportunities and joint ventures), computer science (design and development of the EHC web site), cultural anthropology (inventory of the antiques and artifacts at the EHC), education (an outdoor learning program for grade school children), energy (demonstrations of clean/renewable energy alternatives), environmental studies (demonstrations of environmental best practices), ethnobotany (an analysis of the EHC plant community), geography (a map of the Evergreen Coal Trail), history (documentation of EHC history), leadership studies (plans for special events), mass communications (a video production about the EHC), recreation and parks management (plans for EHC outdoor facilities), and wildlife and fisheries (workshops on responsible water and soil conservation management). FSU also determined that the EHC can provide an outdoor learning laboratory for its Appalachian Center for Ethnobotanical Studies (a virtual center created in a partnership between FSU, the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute, and West Virginia University). In addition, the EHC could complement FSU’s Sustainable Energy Research Facility (which will demonstrate energy alternatives in new construction) by providing opportunities to implement, study, and demonstrate clean/renewable energy alternatives in EHC’s existing facilities.

Allegany College of Maryland (ACM) identified **six continuing education programs** that could utilize the Evergreen Heritage Center to provide learning opportunities for 250+ students, including those in the arts, historical preservation, health and wellness, management and leadership for business, massage therapy, and spiritual development. Continuing education is a key area of focus for ACM because it provides the most flexibility in the development of new course offerings and focuses on ACM’s largest student population. The EHC is viewed as an opportunity to attract more out-of-town visitors to ACM’s continuing education program.

Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS) expressed an interest in utilizing the EHC to support **summer science day camps**, due to structured program requirements during the school year. Summer science day camps would support the objectives of both the GEAR-UP (encouraging children to continue their education) and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs, as well as those of the No Child Left Inside initiative.

Other educational opportunities were also identified during the Study including those for Juvenile Services (“green” job skills), Girl and Boy Scouts (service learning projects), Salvation Army and the YMCA (after school and summer camp workshops), plus field trips and environmental education workshops for Head Start children, PTA sponsored after school programs, home schooling programs, senior day care, and programs for the disabled.

SUCCESSFUL PILOT PROGRAMS

To test the concept of the project while the Study was being planned and then executed, **in 2008, FSU professors began utilizing the EHC as part of their curriculum**. In the spring semester, an environmental planning class conducted an analysis of the EHC property and prepared an extensive environmental report. In the fall of 2008, a forestry class observed a demonstration of responsible timber harvesting, a marketing class identified potential sources of income for the EHC, and an ethnobotany class conducted an inventory of EHC’s wild medicinal herbs. By the spring of 2009, eleven classes were utilizing the EHC for photography, painting, plant analysis, agroforestry projects, and web site design. (Indoor/outdoor learning at the EHC has continued since the completion of the Study and now includes more than twenty courses for the fall of 2009 and spring of 2010.)



FSU Students at the EHC

ASSESSING THE MARKETPLACE FOR POTENTIAL SOURCES OF INCOME

Assessing the marketplace began with a series of interviews and the development of a profile of the region:

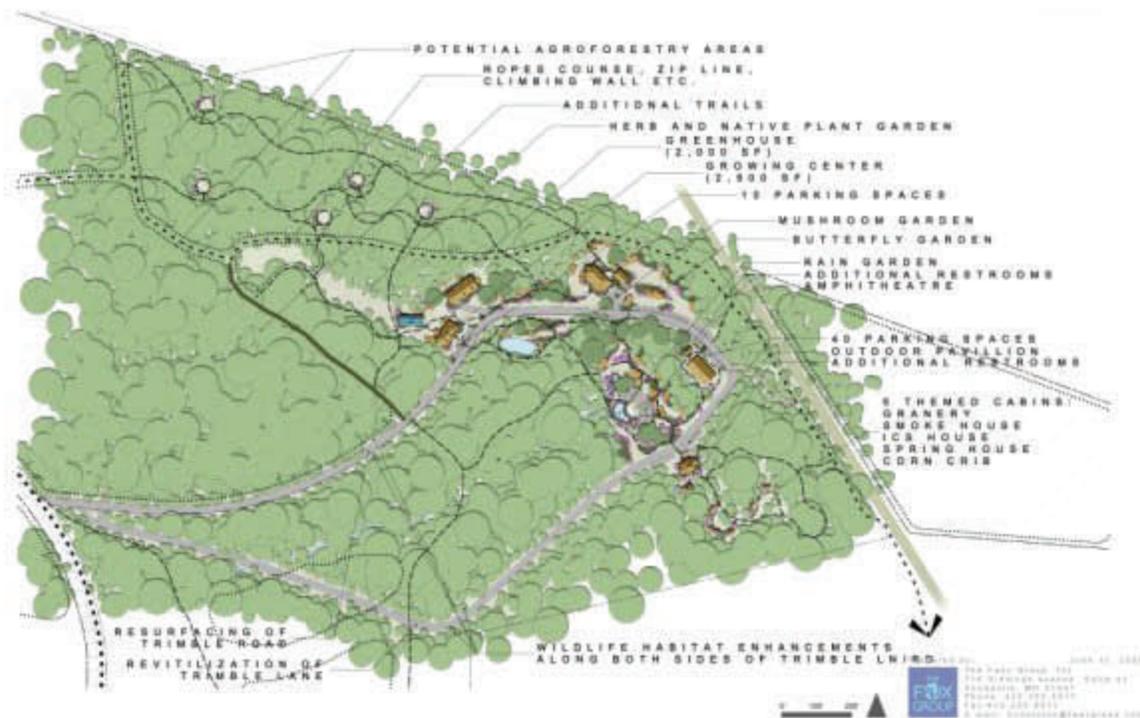
- The **Western Maryland Scenic Railway and the Great Allegheny Passage** were found to be two of the strongest drivers of the area's growing tourism market. (1.8M visitors last year).
- **The Arts** are of growing importance in the region and are drawing more and more visitors.
- **The region is part of a larger market** (within a two hour drive) that contains 2.8M residents, the majority of whom are willing to drive across the region to attractions of interest.
- Although there are a variety of meeting/event spaces for small functions, there is a **strong demand/competition for large events** (150-300 people).

The result is an opportunity for additional tourism activities (particularly those in proximity to the Railway and the Passage) and also for indoor/outdoor venues that provide a flexible, well maintained space for large events.

RECOMMENDED INCOME GENERATING USES OF THE EHC

After evaluating a wide range of potential revenue generating uses of the EHC, considering business factors (e.g. cost), mission alignment, market appeal and competition, and planning factors (e.g. site suitability); the top ranking sources of income included the **historic house and barn; a growing center with greenhouse and arboretum; an outdoor pavilion and amphitheatre; outdoor recreation (hiking, geocaching, and activities along the historic Evergreen Trail); theme cabins for executive retreats; and potentially a multiuse LEED certified ("green") conference center.** These uses would leverage and build upon the existing Evergreen Museum and its adjacent Learning Center. A **conceptual map** of these uses is shown below.

The Evergreen Heritage Center



FEASIBILITY STUDY CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW UP

The conclusion of the Study was that if the partners commit to the project, retain the appropriate personnel, utilize grant funding for implementation of additional facilities, and develop and implement an effective marketing strategy; the partnership to leverage **the EHC for indoor/outdoor learning is feasible, providing its partners with a unique valuable asset that is well aligned with their missions and objectives.**

As mentioned on page two of this pamphlet, while the Study was in progress, FSU utilized the EHC to support hands-on student learning in a variety of subjects. **This school year (fall 2009 and spring 2010) includes more than twenty FSU courses that are offering these real world learning experiences which include:**

- Student **illustrations of EHC native plants and the wildlife** that utilize them. These works of art will be on exhibit in the FSU President's Hallway.
- Student design and development of **the next generation of the EHC web site** (www.evergreenheritagecenter.org), which will incorporate state-of-the-art computers and graphics technology including live feeds to weather and other EHC environmental information. The web site will also provide multi-media presentations of student research and demonstrations (for the benefit of students that follow them).
- A **brochure and map of the Evergreen Trail** created through the use of advanced cartography.
- A native plant **garden of medicinal herbs** and a **mushroom garden** (an agroforestry project created by inoculating fallen logs with shiitake and oyster mushroom spores).
- A **tree ring analysis** of the original 200 year old beams in the Evergreen Barn to verify their age.
- An **paleontological analysis of EHC pollen samples** to map the 200 year history of EHC farming.
- **FSU and ACM education students conducting environmental education activities with Salvation Army, Head Start, and YMCA children.** This program, piloted this year with FSU, will be expanded in 2010 and incorporated into FSU and ACM curriculum. By 2012, this program will be benefiting over 1000 children each year, as well as the college students who will gain credentials for their resumes.

The Foundation is also managing the "Green Growing Initiative" which, **based on recommendations from the Study**, will establish a rural Growing Center at the EHC that will provide even more learning opportunities for students of all ages. The Growing Center, which will include a **"green" greenhouse, lab, and classroom**, will operate as a teaching nursery and serve as an energy efficient showcase that will support research and education in the environmental sciences. This facility will also become self-sustaining through the sale of native plants/seeds, medicinal herbs, agroforestry products (e.g. shiitake mushrooms), as well as wood products/art. This **"green" self-sustaining, teaching nursery**, which will also incorporate stone and timber from the EHC, will provide a pragmatic, replicable model for sustainability.



Head Start Children at the EHC

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Greenhouse Conceptual Design