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Putting Charles St. on the map

Interpretive plan next step in applying for national byway status

10/03/07

VIRGINIA TERHUNE

Some say the way to put Baltimore on tourist maps is to highlight the attractions downtown around the Inner Harbor.

But others say another avenue may be to promote the historic and cultural treasures along Charles Street, which runs nearly straight as an arrow for 12 miles between south Baltimore and Lutherville.

"Charles Street is the cultural main street of Baltimore and the region," said Katie Callahan Durcan, trails and byways manager for the Baltimore Heritage Area, who was recently named byway manager for the Charles Street corridor.

Originally from Buffalo, N.Y., Durcan earned a master's degree from George Washington University in museum studies with a focus on historic preservation. She worked for New York Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan and the National Trust for Historic Preservation before joining the city in April as byways and trails manager for the city's Heritage Area, which includes the Mount Vernon District and part of Charles Street.

Tourism is the city's third-largest industry, according to the Heritage Area Web site. To help support the industry, the State Highway Administration recently released its latest free Scenic Byways map and guidebook, updating maps published in 2000. They provide information about the state's 19 Scenic



Charles Street scenic byway manager Katie Callahan Durcan and State Highway Administration scenic byways program coordinator Terry Maxwell stand near a byway sign north of Gittings Avenue.

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Byways, including Charles Street.

One of Durcan's main jobs will be to coordinate the state's application to the Federal Highway Administration to name Charles Street a National Scenic Byway, enabling the state to apply for money to preserve the corridor's unique characteristics. Right now, Maryland has three national byways Ð the historic National Road running from Baltimore west through Catonsville and the Allegheny Mountains, the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway through the Eastern Shore and Catoctin Mountain Scenic Byway in Frederick County.

Late last year, the city released a 100-page corridor management plan developed by a group of city and county agencies and an advisory committee made up of community groups and institutions. Attached to the plan are two appendices totaling more than 100 pages that list buildings and resources of note along the route.

Charles Street is home to working- class row houses at the southern end and mansions near the northern end. It is also home to the Walters Art Museum, the Baltimore Museum of Art, Johns Hopkins University's Homewood campus, Loyola College and the College of Notre Dame.

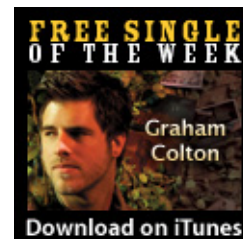
Other corridor notables include Charles Village, Highfield House, designed by Mies van der Rohe, and the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen.

Now that the corridor plan is complete, the next step, already funded, is to develop an interpretive plan in applying for national Scenic Byway status, Durcan said. Interpretative plans typically explain to visitors what there is to see along the route.

Her job will include recruiting members of the all-volunteer advisory committee chosen by Mayor Sheila Dixon and Baltimore County Executive Jim Smith. She will also work on ways to accommodate new development while preserving qualities that make the byway unique, and helping to implement some of the ideas in the corridor plan.

For more information about the Maryland Scenic Byways map and guide, go to www.sha.state.md.us or call 1-877-632-9929.

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