

APPENDIX C: INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES AND PROGRAM GUIDELINES

GOALS DISCUSSION

Interpretation strengthens the connections between people and place. By broadening gorge visitors' perceptions of the places they visit for recreation and renewal, interpretation expands the capacity for the public to understand and care for the gorge. By making the public aware of the ongoing work of preserving and enhancing the natural systems that underlie the gorge experience, the interpretive system can help redefine the relationship between the public and its open space resources. With so many layers of Spokane's history visible in whole or in part around the Great Spokane River Gorge it presents a unique opportunity to share and celebrate Spokane's heritage.

Some goals for the Great Spokane River Gorge interpretive strategy are to:

- Increase awareness of the natural and cultural heritage of Spokane and the importance of protecting the resources that tell that history.
- Build a following for the gorge; increase the use of the gorge resources.
- Develop the understanding that the gorge is a system of connected places, tied into a network of regional attractions, parks, and natural features.
- Provide a diverse set of learning experiences using a diverse range of media.
- Engage a wide range of audiences, and serve diverse ages, levels of experience, and interests.
- Optimize the uniqueness of each place around the gorge, while conveying an overall impression of the themes of Spokane's natural and cultural heritage.

This section provides a strategy for an interpretive system throughout the gorge as well as a broader approach to public engagement around its unique resources. Interpretive signs and brochures have been used to interpret Spokane to the public, especially at the falls and Riverfront Park. This section focuses on expanding interpretation efforts in a coordinated fashion to provide comprehensive interpretation throughout the gorge environment. The interpretive program should encourage visitor exploration by clearly communicating through multiple techniques what resources are available, and reward visitor exploration by providing a high quality learning experience for all users.

GUIDELINES DISCUSSION

There are two important topics to consider before specific interpretive projects can be undertaken. The first is the overall interpretive concept and the themes and stories that grow from it. The second is the methods of communication.

Concept, Themes, and Stories

The Vision Statement of the 2002 Conceptual Plan proclaimed the following, "Spokane's many cultures, as collaborative caretakers, honor and protect the Great Spokane River

Gorge as our gateway to understanding the unique cultural, historical, geological, and spiritual significance of our region. This is accomplished through education, access, and enlightened interaction of people and the natural environment.” This is a profound statement and the perfect foundation for an interpretive plan. With this statement as the overarching concept, themes and stories can be developed to guide the development of interpretive messages. The concept, themes, and stories (sub-themes) form a bridge between interpretive goals and interpretive messages, helping to make sure that the big picture of the interpretive plan goals are carried out as the interpretive plan is implemented. The themes and stories listed below are the result of public workshops during the planning process. Some issues and opportunities to consider for each story are noted as well. Thorough scholarship by qualified historians and appropriate professionals should precede their application in specific interpretive features.

Theme#1: Natural Processes and Human Actions

1-1 Basalt Flows and Great Floods

- Columbia Plateau formed by numerous basalt flows from fissures.
- Geologic features at and around falls are part of these basalt flows.
- Cataclysmic floods from glacial Lake Missoula shaped much of Inland Northwest and exposed basalt features.
- Glacial erratics, big boulders, were carried from Montana to the gorge.
- Today the Ice Age Floods Institute is telling the geologic story.

1-2 Native Habitats

- Native habitats are influenced by proximity to water and exposure to sun—basically Ponderosa Pine savanna on the north slope, Douglas Fir mixed forest on the south slope, and riparian and wetlands along the river.
- Native wildlife includes osprey, eagle, mink, beaver, deer, and more.
- Most of the landscape has been significantly disturbed and there are many invasive plants that have overwhelmed the native species.
- There are some remnants of native ecology we can learn from and apply through restoration to other gorge places.
- The dark night sky is important to healthy habitat and happy neighbors.

1-3 Health of the River

- River water quality and quantity are important for people and wildlife.
- River health is related to aquifer health and actions taken throughout the watershed from mining above lakes to the dams on the way to the Pacific to the way we use water in the city.
- The presence or absence of salmon is a profound measure of river health.

1-4 Green Infrastructure

- Open space can provide ecological services like stormwater management and flood control while creating habitat for wildlife and amenities for the community.
- Demonstration features at Summit property, People’s Park, and Highbridge Park can educate the public about better practices.

Theme#2: Native Peoples' Stories

2-1 Coyote Created the Falls

- Share the falls creation story of the Spokane and other tribes.
- Side-by-side interpretation from multiple perspectives could enrich understanding of the falls and gorge.
- Some of the sacred features near the falls have been covered by rail grade fill. The fill should remain, but the features underneath could be explained.

2-2 Gathering of the Peoples

- The Spokane shared the bounty of salmon that gathered at the falls with the tribes of the region.
- The gorge should accommodate contemporary native events- the annual powwow and other smaller activities.

2-3 The Confluence

- The place where the waters come together was also the place where people gathered so there are many archeological sites that need to be treated sensitively, whether simply protected or also interpreted.
- Tell the story of Hangman Creek with interpretives, memorial, etc.
- The area up into Indian Canyon was an important wintering ground.
- Spokane Garry lived nearby in his last days.

2-4 Living History

- The story of native people in Spokane is ongoing, not just historical facts.
- Activities and practices can be interpreted and shared by the tribes today and into the future.
- The collections at the MAC and other institutions could be complemented by a cultural/community center or interpretives that focuses on the ongoing living history of the tribes.

Theme#3: Industry At the River

3-1 Dams at the Falls

- Spokane Falls attracted newcomers and grew an economy around the energy of the falls driving mills and power plants.
- There are many interpretive signs about this era, but there could be more educational experiences or facilities.

3-2 Railroads and Regional Power

- Spokane was a hub for the flow of natural resources and agricultural products.
- Extensive infrastructure was constructed to support the railroads.
- Some of the relics from the railroad era remain and should be preserved-bridges, retaining walls, roundhouse, abutments, etc.

3-3 Working Class and Labor Activism

- Peaceful Valley was built by and for the tradesmen (many northern European) that rebuilt Spokane after the Great Fire.
- Peaceful Valley was a center of labor union activities of the Wobblies and others.

3-4 1974 Reclamation of the Riverfront

- With the decision to hold the 1974 World's Fair on reclaimed former railyards and industrial lands above the falls, Spokane began to implement a vision of a river for people.
- This follows on many decades of work by the Parks Board to acquire land for the public.
- The Great Spokane River Gorge planning process is an extension of this movement.

Theme#4: Community Connections to the Gorge

4-1 Downtown

- The public library, City Hall, Masonic Temple, Spokane Club, and many other civic buildings are right at the falls and gorge.
- The City should have a front porch on the gorge, not turn its back on it.
- The easternmost end of the Summit properties offers views back to downtown and could have another civic promenade as part of the mixed use development.
- Views across are critical to the experience of the gorge.

4-2 Neighborhoods

- There are many historic homes in Peaceful Valley, Browne's Addition, and the West Central neighborhoods that could be part of interpretive walks.
- Glover Field and the community center are an important resource for the community. The field once had more diverse events such as maypoles for kids, labor activities, the Indian Congress, etc. and fantastic grandstands.
- Neighborhoods could be involved in community art and interpretation projects and competitions around the gorge such as a graffiti art wall, interpretive dialogs, etc.
- Some people in the neighborhoods do not want it made more accessible to visitors from outside the neighborhood while others do recognize the importance of interpretation and public access to its long-term preservation.

4-3 The Museum of Arts and Culture

- The MAC collects art, artifacts, and primary source material in three disciplines: regional history, fine art, and American Indian and other cultures.
- The MAC sits near the northwestern corner of Browne's Addition, with views out over the gorge to the west. Their campus and collections attract visitors from around the region and serve as a community space for major city events like Artfest.
- The MAC could integrate further with the gorge by programming a satellite facility at a location in the gorge such as a visitor center at People's Park. This location would be only a few minutes from the main campus.

4-4 The Confluence

- As a counterpoint to the downtown attractions and the falls, the confluence of the Spokane River and Hangman Creek is an ideal spot to interpret the interaction of nature and culture, especially for visitors.
- The majority of People's Park could be restored and preserved for its natural and tribal significance, but some of the disturbed lands at the east end could be an ideal location for to welcome and orient visitors at the intersection of regional trails, waterways, and cultures.
- This location is also easily reached from I-90 without going through downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods. It is a good spot to get people out of their cars and onto

the trails and the river, but first with some knowledge from available interpretation facilities, storytellers, etc.

Methods

Methods are the vehicles for communicating interpretive messages to the public. They range in scale from interpretive centers, facilities offering a wide range of interpretive and wayfinding information, to volunteer docents, to brochures describing interpretive resources. Each method also plays a role in one of three different types of interpretive communication: site-based, general outreach, and focused outreach. As implementation plans are developed, facilities may be planned to include separate functions within the same building or program. The following descriptions of various methods and media include a summary of their general approaches, physical requirements, and audiences. These methods and media can be used as a toolbox in the planning of interpretive projects to develop the best fit between the desired audience, communication goals, and development budget.

An Interpretive Center is a staffed facility with indoor interpretives exhibits and activities for drop-in visitors and organized groups. Interpretation is focused on the resources of the gorge. Interpretive displays and activities are flexible to maintain the interest of repeat visitors. This program may be accommodated in a wide variety of building sizes and arrangements in either reused/renovated or new facilities. The audience is all gorge visitors, with an emphasis on school groups and program participants. Repeat visitors are likely to be a large and strategically important audience. In addition to an interpretation role, a center could provide a recognizable point of contact for orientation, education, regulations, programs & schedules, and even retail sales.

An Education Center is classroom and laboratory space to support organized group classes and programs. Ideally, this is an area within an interpretive center capable of being used for multiple purposes including visitor education, community meetings, workshops, or events. The primary audience is school groups and program participants.

An Outdoor Education Area facilitates the use of open space for school programs. It provides areas for group activities out of main traffic areas and orientation to interpretive resources. Outdoor education areas are important support facilities for a school stewardship program. When not being used for group programs, the areas may be used as docent areas for drop-in visitors. These areas may have some structured cover for protection from weather. The primary audience is program participants, especially schoolchildren.

Interpreters trained to present the lifeways of various periods and perspectives in gorge history can illustrate Living History. Many possible subjects, from native peoples and early settlement to more current issues of environmental and community activism, could be highlighted for gorge visitors. Ongoing tribal traditions, such as dancing, camas bulb digging, fishing, etc. could be shared with visitors in an interpretive environment designed to include important cultural landscape features.

A Viewpoint is a feature developed for viewing a special scene or resource. Possibilities include viewing towers, overlooks, wildlife and bird watching blinds, and

treetop walks. These facilities are intended to allow a specific experience that would not otherwise be available to visitors. Interpretive and orientation materials should be developed to take advantage of the opportunity. The primary audience is all gorge visitors.

Kiosks are freestanding outdoor structures incorporating permanent orientation displays as well as bulletin board space. They provide an opportunity for interpretation depending on location in relation to resources. Where appropriate, kiosks are the hubs of a developed visitor node including seating and garbage collection. Kiosks provide the opportunity to be a recognizable system-wide orientation element with displays at a variety of scales. The primary audience is all gorge visitors.

Interpretive Trails provide all gorge visitors access to interpretive resources with accompanying interpretive information. They might involve signs, keyed brochures, audio programs, or other interpretive accompaniment. Actual construction method of trails varies with the context, from soft surface to a developed boardwalk. Interpretive trails with combined recreational use should provide facilities such as small waysides to allow interpretive users to leave the flow of recreational traffic. Site-based interpretation provides authenticity and multi-sensory reality that is not always available in interpretive centers or descriptive brochures. They also provide the opportunity for physical design that reinforces the desired interpretive context.

Interpretive Signs are free-standing or building-mounted interpretive panels that deliver interpretive stories to all gorge visitors on-site. Advantages of interpretive signage include a fixed cost for the benefit of many users, a physical presence that reminds users of the value of the resource, and the availability of high quality graphic reproduction. Disadvantages include a lack of flexibility for interpretation to repeat visitors, changing interpretive goals, or to meet the needs of different audiences.

School Stewardship Programs make the gorge a component of the Spokane's educational system and inspire stewardship among students. Parts of the gorge can be a setting for formalized experiential learning, for special educational programs outside of the school system, and for informal learning experiences either within the family or other social groups. The interpretive system is a resource for all of these activities, from providing facilities support for formal educational activities to developing more passive opportunities such as signs and brochures. The gorge would benefit from any stewardship work done by the students, but even more importantly the purpose of gorge preservation would be furthered by the opportunity for students to use it, value it, and understand the importance of its preservation and restoration. The primary audience would be teachers and students from kindergarten through university so programs would have to be tailored to different age groups.

Historical Exhibits such as artifacts and reconstructions represent actual activities and features. Historical exhibits and scenes can occupy a room in a building or, where appropriate and safe from vandalism, large durable objects can form outdoor historical exhibits. These exhibits engage all gorge visitors in experiences of historical elements and can be paired to with powerful effect with Living History interpreters. Where objects are durable they can even be interactive or kinetic to allow a more rich experience.

Interpretive Brochures are an affordable and versatile medium for public communication. Brochures can be designed to meet the needs of specific interest and age groups, and to provide a varying interpretive approach to the same resource. In the context of the gorge interpretive system, two types of interpretive brochures may be appropriate. The first is site-specific, for example a brochure about the resources at the confluence, that are keyed to located interpretive stations or resources. The second is theme-related brochures, that can be used to interpret common elements all around the gorge, for example “Bird Watching Around the Gorge” or “Ice Age Floods Features at the Gorge.”

Volunteer Docents, either roaming or at designated locations, educate gorge visitors and program participants. They provide valuable information and an informal crime-detering presence. Docents could lead special events such as interpretive river rafting or gorge loop walks. However, docent programs require training and coordination for effective interpretation. Programs may need facility support for staging, training, and prop storage.

Online Resources, such as a website and email newsletter, can be an effective method for up-to-date public communication. The content of the site could include regularly updated schedules of programs and events, descriptions of gorge resources, and similar subjects. The Friends of the Falls already has a good website that could be adapted over time as more resources become available. The primary audience is the general public, but specific features could be tailored to school groups. For example, students could learn background and complete exercises before and after visiting the gorge.

Orientation Maps describe where resources are, and how they can be used. Typical examples include bicycling maps, nature trail guides, historic home walking tours, etc. The audience is the general public and gorge visitors.

Mobile Displays are freestanding display boards with interpretive text and graphics for interpretation away from the gorge. Mobile displays are a versatile medium for taking interpretation to various public venues such as schools. Displays can be rotated for variety, and used at public events and gathering areas outside of the parks as general outreach.

Teaching Field Notebooks are guides for local teachers describing the educational resources of the gorge. Information would likely be a mix of orientation, description of resources, and activity planning materials relevant to using the parks as a learning environment. This could be a tool in a School Stewardship Program. The primary audience is teachers, but appropriate levels should be identified based on desired target students and school system resources.

Slide or Powerpoint Presentations are another medium that can be used to communicate with outside groups. Shows can be developed as orientation to gorge resources, as an introduction to interpretive or educational programs, or around specific interpretive themes. Slide shows and Powerpoint presentations can be easily updated and volunteers can be trained to present them to the general public or targeted groups as part of an organized outreach program.

Contact with News Media that results in newspaper stories, or radio and television coverage can be an important outreach tool. The news media can be extremely effective for communication of gorge activities and resources to the general public. However, personal contacts with representatives of various media need to be cultivated and maintained and they generally prefer to cover “new” and interesting stories so messages will need to be crafted creatively to demonstrate progress and attract attention.