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Chapter 2 • Niagara's Interpretive Presentation

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area was created by Congress to recognize the national significance of the region's natural and cultural legacies and to promote the preservation and stewardship of their associated resources. Local partners envision that the National Heritage Area is a means through which regional cooperation can be fostered for the purpose of community revitalization. Interpretation and heritage tourism are central to the region's community revitalization strategy.

Niagara Falls is a world class visitor attraction. An estimated six to eight million visitors come to the American side of the Falls each year. However, few of these visitors explore beyond the immediate vicinity of the Falls, and their potential economic impacts upon local and regional communities are not fully realized. The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area seeks to help partners create a world class visitor experience along the Niagara River and Gorge that will attract visitors, encourage them to explore, and provide benefits to the local and regional economy. Through the heritage area initiatives, communities will be strengthened, residents will be engaged, and the region's natural and cultural resources will be recognized, preserved, and enhanced.

Creating a world class visitor experience requires an integrated program of interpretation and heritage tourism. Heritage tourism is addressed in Chapter 3 of this management plan. This chapter outlines how the heritage area can create an interpretative presentation that engages visitors and residents in support of community goals.

2.1 Vision and Goals for Interpretation

A series of nine goals were identified for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area during planning for the management plan addressing various areas of interest and potential action. The goals are listed in Chapter 1 of the plan. The heritage area's goal for interpretation and education reads:

Interpretation and Education - Assure the creation of a high quality educational and interpretive program, providing partners with a framework and opportunities to inform and inspire a wide range of audiences and nurture public appreciation for the diverse communities, cultures, resources and environments in the Niagara region.

In the heritage area's Preferred Alternative, the following conceptual approach was developed for achieving this goal:

- Collaborate with partners in developing an interpretive framework and plan and in **networking attractions**, to reach a wide range of audiences and nurture public appreciation for the region's communities, cultures, resources, and environments.
- Identify an **interpretive hub and linkages for each of the four themes**; stimulate **coordinated landscape exhibits** for each; and support partners' related interior programming.
- **Support partners** in implementing their sites' portions of the interpretive plan, beginning with a **core program, with other experiences phased in** over time.

- **Assist local partners in establishing and supporting a central database** of materials, publications and artifacts related to interpretive subjects and **encourage scholarly research**.
- Establish the **Falls to the Fort as a regional interpretive connector** to places and programs throughout Niagara and Erie counties and the Niagara Region of Canada.
- Provide interpretive content to visitors through easily accessible **social media and other technological formats**.
- Establish a comprehensive **graphic identity**, including **signage, publications, website, and promotional materials**. Materials related to **each of the four themes would have identifiably distinct appearances** coordinated within the same format (using elements such as color or icons).
- Operate a **central interpretive center** with exhibits introducing the heritage area themes.
- **Plan and implement** a comprehensive system of landscape interpretive exhibits along an extensive system of trails along the gorge and in communities.

2.1.1 Organizing the Interpretive Presentation

The conceptual approach for interpretation included in the Preferred Alternative and listed above provides the basis for the heritage area's interpretive presentation. Detailed recommendations for organizing and implementing this conceptual approach are outlined in the following sections of this chapter. These recommendations provide a structure through which specific actions can be taken by partners for coordinated interpretation.

The recommendations are organized into (1) actions that should be undertaken heritage area-wide to support the entire interpretive presentation, (2) actions for presentation of each of the heritage area's key interpretive themes, and (3) actions for coordinating interpretation of heritage area themes regionally at affiliated sites throughout Niagara and Erie Counties.

Heritage Area-wide Initiatives

Heritage area-wide initiatives are needed to coordinate the actions of individual partners and to present the heritage area's interpretive experience as an integrated whole. These initiatives should introduce interpretive opportunities to visitors and encourage them to explore. They should present the heritage area's themes, explain where and how interpretation is offered, provide interpretive context that highlights meaning and significance, and create interpretive linkages between the themes and stories offered at various locations. In general, heritage area-wide initiatives should be led by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and its subcommittees, comprised of partnering organizations.

Presenting Heritage Area Themes

Themes are the big ideas and organizing framework within which interpretation of individual resources and stories may be presented and understood in the context of the whole. The 2005 Study Report for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area identified four primary interpretive themes that help convey the overall history and significance of the Niagara Falls region and its peoples. The four interpretive themes are:

Natural Phenomenon – the story of the Niagara region's landscape and natural history;

Tourism and Recreation – the story that tourism played in the region's development;

Power and Industry – the story of Niagara's pivotal role in the development of electricity as a power source and how it transformed twentieth century American life; and

Borderlands/Border Crossing – the story of the Niagara Frontier and the region's role as a contested borderland and boundary in which empires, nations, and peoples with conflicting perceptions and interests vied.

These four themes identified for the heritage area are intended to be broad and comprehensive so that they capture the wide range of potential stories significant to individual communities and sites. The use of these themes will help determine how interpretation will be undertaken heritage area-wide, how regional interpretation might be organized, and how linkages between sites and resources might be created. The theme Borderlands/Border Crossing is further divided into five key storylines that can be used to convey the theme and are significant stories within the region. Additional stories related to border themes could be developed. The five current storylines include:

The Western Door – the story of the Six Nations, or Haudenosaunee, in the vicinity of the Niagara River and what would become Western New York;

Clash of Empires – the story of Niagara as a key portal to the American interior, and native peoples as key regional players, in the world-wide clash of British and French empires during the mid-eighteenth century;

Revolutionary Frontier – the story of the region's experience as the British contact point with the Haudenosaunee homeland during the American Revolution;

War of 1812 – the story of international conflict and violence between cross-border neighbors in the war between Britain and the United States, and that war's impact on the Haudenosaunee; and

Underground Railroad – the story of escape to Upper Canada by African Americans fleeing slavery in the years before the Civil War.

Together, the four primary heritage area themes and the five Borderlands/Border Crossing themes encompass the range of stories upon which the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area will focus. These themes are used as the organizing structure for the interpretive presentation outlined in this chapter.

Regional Collaboration

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is envisioned as a regional initiative including Niagara and Erie Counties in their entirety. While the core of the heritage area is located along the Niagara River from just above the Falls north to Lake Ontario, linkages to communities and sites throughout the two counties provide an opportunity to strengthen regional identity and further regional collaboration. Working through interpretation, heritage tourism, historic preservation, and the conservation and stewardship of natural resources, the heritage area provides a framework through which to organize and amplify regional action. Together with our Canadian partners, the existing international regional identity can be further established and enhanced.

2.1.2 Desired Interpretive Experience

The implementation of a high quality interpretive experience is essential if the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is to achieve its core mission of engaging visitors and encouraging them to explore the Niagara River corridor and the region. The following ideas represent the desired interpretive experience that visitors should come away with after experiencing the heritage area's presentation. In planning

interpretation, these ideas should be used as benchmarks in assessing whether the planned presentation is meeting the desired goals. Upon experiencing the heritage area's interpretive presentation, visitors should:

- Appreciate the range of themes for which the Niagara region is significant.
- Be able to identify at least two of the heritage area themes.
- Understand how a theme or story's significance relates to the national and international context of the time.
- Relate themes and stories to the landscape and the actual places where events occurred.
- Be able to identify four locations where historical events took place.
- Be able to envision the landscape as it existed at the time of the story being told even though the landscape may have since changed dramatically.
- Appreciate the impact a story or event had upon the lives of people, how it changed the course of events.
- See the story from the perspective of others who may have different points of view.
- Be encouraged to consider what the story means to their own lives today.
- Be stimulated to learn more, seek additional information on their own, and explore other places within the heritage area.
- Understand how the Niagara region has embraced its heritage and through it created a vision for its future.
- Will stay longer or return for another visit.

2.1.3 Guiding Principles for Interpretation

The following guiding principles are recommended to inform decision-making for interpretation at individual sites and heritage area-wide. These guiding principles are common to most interpretive initiatives but are particularly important to the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area because of the world class level of quality that is envisioned. Interpretation within the heritage area may be implemented by a variety of different partners over time and should be closely coordinated. Where heritage area support is anticipated, the heritage area's interpretive guidelines should be followed and its Interpretive Committee, discussed later in this chapter, should review proposed plans. The following principles should be helpful in such reviews.

- **Quality:** Interpretation within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should be of the highest quality in keeping with the world class reputation of the Falls. Interpretive exhibits and installations should meet the highest standards in terms of conception, design, materials, fabrication, storytelling, accessibility, and overall experience. Personal interpretive services and events should match this level of quality. Customized design guidelines for exhibits and infrastructure should be used to assist partners in meeting and maintaining quality standards. In cases where funding is being made available to a heritage area partner for projects and installations, a review of the proposed project and installations is suggested to assure consistency with heritage area goals and themes. The National Heritage Area would be able to provide design assistance and technical support to partner organizations in the development of relevant projects. Installations should be designed to complement the landscapes in which they are located. They should contribute to community enhancement for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.
- **Creativity:** The heritage area should promote creativity in its interpretive exhibits, installations, and personal services while emphasizing quality. Wherever possible, creative alternatives to signage and waysides should be encouraged in conveying interpretive content. Artwork and landscape installations are particularly appropriate ways to provide interpretation while enhancing the community context. The heritage area should become known for the range and quality of its interpretive art.

- **Accuracy:** Interpretive content should be well-researched and accurate. Source material should be identified in the development of interpretive content and should be consistent with the standards used by professional historians. The extent of what is actually known and unknown should be clearly conveyed to visitors. There should be no conjecture. Sometimes, what is *not* known is extremely interesting. If stories are based upon legend, lore, or oral tradition, this should be clearly stated. The heritage area should have a review committee of professionally trained historians and interpreters to advise partners in the development of interpretation and review proposed interpretive content.
- **Authenticity of Place:** To the extent possible, each story should be told in the actual place where it happened, connecting the story directly to a place that is tangible and real. This should be done even when the place has significantly changed as compared to its historical appearance. Whenever possible, authentic physical features—buildings, roads, landscapes, and other resources—should be used to tell the stories. The scale and character of the historic landscape should be conveyed to the audience to help them better visualize and experience the story being told. In cases where the landscape has changed, interpretation should convey its historical appearance through sketches, artwork, historic photographs, or even verbal descriptions using actual physical features for reference. In some cases, objects or ‘placemakers’ can be used to mark locations for reference by interpretation.
- **Experiential Learning:** People learn and remember things better when they physically do them. Interpretation should be experiential to the maximum degree possible. Communication that is visual and tied to real things and authentic places and features should be emphasized over the reading of waysides and text. Public art can be very helpful in conveying interpretive content through the senses. Walking a trail being described interpretively helps visitors experience the story through their muscles. Hearing first person stories from a living history interpreter has a stronger impact than reading text. The opportunity to actively do things should be offered whenever possible over the mere providing of information. Visitors should be encouraged to experience stories and landscapes through their senses.
- **Variety of Experiences:** Interpretive media and techniques should be designed to acknowledge different learning styles and generational differences in how information is absorbed. A variety of possible experiences should be provided in order to satisfy the interests and capabilities of different age groups, temperaments, and orientations. Options should offer varying levels of activity, timeframes, and levels of required concentration. For instance, alternative walking tours of 10 minutes, 30 minutes, and 60 minutes in length provide options for individuals with different levels of stamina or time constraints. Roving interpreters could be stationed at key places during periods of high visitation. Alternative ways to experience interpretation should be provided for individuals with physical limitations or disabilities.
- **Opportunities to Explore:** Audiences should be given opportunities to explore both in a physical sense and in terms of interpretive themes and stories. In the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, encouraging visitors to explore communities and sites from the ‘Falls to the Fort’ is a primary goal and is to be accomplished by making exploration easy and by providing rewarding experiences. Tempting leads and interpretive connections should invite visitors to move from place to place. Themes and stories should be presented in ways that help visitors draw connections, spark interests, and encourage further investigation. Revelations and surprises should be incorporated into the experience. The information and tools needed to follow through on interests should be available at every turn.

- **Context:** Each story being told should be connected to the broader historical context using heritage area themes. Stories should be used to illustrate themes and relate to the bigger picture in ways that make them immediate and understandable. The historical context surrounding each story should be clearly communicated in broad strokes that are accurate but easily grasped. Through the context, connections can be drawn between interpretive content offered at different locations.
- **Significance and Meanings:** Interpretation is more than the mere reciting of facts. Storytelling conveys facts, but interpretation goes beyond by drawing connections from a story and conveying significance and meaning to its audience. Good storytelling can be interesting, but it only becomes meaningful when it makes a larger point or touches a larger truth. In developing interpretive content, each story should be examined for its significance. Why is this history relevant to us today? Each story or interpretive exhibit should have a key message it is intended to convey. The story's significance or message should be communicated to the audience in a way that helps them connect it to their own life experiences. Through this connection, we hope to evoke realizations and affect how those in the audience may think or act regarding the subject. If we succeed, the interpretive experience will have been meaningful.
- **Multiple Points of View:** Visitors should be offered stories from multiple points of view and be led to appreciate how stories may hold multiple meanings. Varying perspectives should be presented in their historical context so we appreciate how people from diverse groups saw things differently. Visitors should not be told what to think but should be allowed to make their own decisions and draw their own conclusions.
- **Shared Human Experience:** Interpretation should be provided in ways that help audiences identify with it and relate it to experiences in their own lives. Using the authentic stories of real people in their own words in the actual places where events occurred should be encouraged wherever possible. The expression of universal concepts such as love, loss, satisfaction, anxiety, pride, uncertainty, etc. with which everyone can empathize and relate to in their own lives helps forge a personal connection to a story.
- **Opportunities to Engage and Support:** Whenever appropriate, audiences should be made aware of the heritage area's vision and mission and be offered the opportunity to engage in supporting activities and initiatives. In the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, community revitalization is a major goal. Many of the heritage area's stories relate to changes that have occurred to the landscapes, communities, and peoples of the region, some of which had undesired or unpleasant consequences. The lessons we learn from them have meaning for the future.

2.1.4 Organizing for Implementation

As noted earlier in this chapter, the heritage area interpretive presentation is organized into three broad parts: (1) the heritage area-wide presentation, (2) presentation of each of the key interpretive themes, and (3) interpretive regional connections to other sites in Niagara and Erie Counties. Chapter 7 of this plan, *Management and Implementation*, addresses how the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should be organized for implementation.

From an interpretive perspective, however, it is anticipated that the heritage area's 'coordinating entity,' the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission or its eventual successor organization, should have responsibility for implementing most elements of the heritage area-wide presentation. As discussed in the following section of this chapter, the heritage area-wide presentation is expected to include such tasks as

creating a heritage area website and other media, publications, living history and interpretive guide services, and other initiatives that coordinate and support the heritage area presentation as a whole. Some tasks might be undertaken by partners specializing in the area of concern, such as having the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation implement initiatives involving marketing and promotion. However in general, the Commission through its subcommittees and staff is expected to lead and coordinate most heritage area-wide initiatives.

The presentation of the heritage area's key interpretive themes will be implemented primarily through collaboration between the Commission and selected partners associated with each theme and/or the places where those themes are presented. The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area has relatively few locations where interior exhibits are offered related to its interpretive themes. Among the different partners and visitor attractions that do offer interior exhibits are the State Park's Visitors Center and Discovery Center, Power Vista, Castellani Art Museum, Customs House, Lewiston Museum, Town of Porter Historical Museum, and Old Fort Niagara. While the heritage area presentation will feature and coordinate with these attractions and their interior exhibits, much of the heritage area's interpretive presentation will be implemented using outdoor landscape exhibits in the places most directly associated with each individual theme.

The following sections of this chapter outline recommendations for how each heritage area theme and storyline might be presented, including locations where interpretation could be featured and key partners who should be involved. Specific ideas cited for interpretation are intended as examples to demonstrate the kinds of initiatives that could be undertaken and to encourage creative thought. It is anticipated that some of these existing ideas will be further developed for implementation and that new ideas will be introduced for consideration as planning and implementation proceed.

Phasing will be required in the implementation of interpretation for each theme. In the following sections of this chapter, a core program for the interpretation of each theme is described and suggestions for phasing are outlined. The Commission through its subcommittees and staff should be responsible for coordinating implementation, even though actual implementation projects may be the responsibility of partners.

Individual implementation projects may be costly both because of the level of quality to which the heritage area aspires and because landscape installations undertaken in publicly owned locations may require public design, compliance, and procurement processes. For these reasons, large scale implementation projects may take time to complete. Where possible, initial steps toward implementation should favor less costly projects that can be undertaken in the short term. Experimentation to see what works should also be a priority before large investments are made. In any case, the heritage area should not undertake or promote interpretation that does not meet the quality standards that assure visitors have a satisfying experience.

Encouraging Quality through Interpretive Planning

This management plan provides a conceptual overview of how each of the heritage area's key themes may be interpreted. Design development and additional detail, however, will be required for implementation. In order to promote the level of quality needed to attract visitors, a process of design review should be implemented for interpretive initiatives. Quality standards for attractions and visitor services are outlined in Chapter 3, *Niagara's Visitor Experience*. An additional process is needed specifically for interpretive exhibits, many of which will be implemented not at attractions but outdoors on publicly owned lands.

Interpretive projects should be identified, conceived, prioritized, and planned through a heritage area planning process for interpretation and visitor experience. Partners and interested individuals should be

engaged early for input as ideas are being developed. Where projects are the initiatives of partners, the participation of the National Heritage Area should be sought early, and heritage area encouragement and support should be provided.

As individual projects are undertaken, interpretive plans should be prepared to the appropriate level of detail describing the proposed interpretation to be implemented and its position and role within the heritage area's overall interpretive presentation. Projects involving heritage area funding, support, or promotion should go through a heritage area review and approval process for quality control prior to implementation.

Interpretive plans for prioritized projects should be prepared at the conceptual or schematic stage of design documentation. They should be reviewed by the heritage area's Interpretive Committee for consistency with the heritage area program and guidelines. Heritage area affiliated projects should not proceed until the committee's approval has been obtained. Planning requirements should be flexible, constructive, and tailored to the nature and circumstances of the project. They need not be complicated or burdensome. In general, interpretive plans should provide the following information.

- Partners undertaking the interpretive project;
- Overall project concept and objectives;
- Location and site plan;
- Intended audiences;
- Consistency with the heritage area's management plan and guidelines;
- Heritage area themes and sub-themes being interpreted;
- Interpretive media to be used;
- Key interpretive message for each exhibit;
- Authenticity and accuracy of interpretive content;
- Exhibit or installation designs;
- Consistency of the physical design of the exhibit or installation with established heritage area or partnership formats and design guidelines;
- Supporting landscape infrastructure, if any;
- Interpretive connections to other sites and partners;
- Estimated project costs.

Quality Standards and Assessment

Chapter 3 of this management plan, *Niagara's Visitor Experience*, discusses creation of a two-level quality standards program for attractions, events, and visitor services. This program is intended to include the quality standards for personal and non-personal interpretation offered at interpretive sites and attractions. As discussed in Chapter 3, benefits of participation in the quality standards program could include the National Heritage Area's 'mark of quality,' networking opportunities, volunteer assistance, heritage area grants, technical assistance, and marketing.

The heritage area's Interpretive Committee, discussed in the following section, should have the responsibility of guiding the development of quality standards for interpretation. In implementing the idea of visitor readiness assessments as a benefit to partners, as discussed in Chapter 3, specific assessments could be offered with respect to interpretive experience. Experts in interpretive programming could be made available to sites and staff as a form of technical assistance for program evaluation, program development, and training.

2.2 The Heritage Area-wide Presentation

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area interpretive presentation should create a range of interpretive experiences designed to encourage visitors to explore from the Falls to the Fort. The presentation should combine existing interpretation offered at visitor attractions with new landscape interpretation to be offered at locations within communities and all along the river corridor. This coordinated, high quality interpretive presentation will complement the level of quality envisioned for the Niagara Experience Center.

Within the City of Niagara Falls, the interpretive presentation should directly support the city's Comprehensive Plan by interpreting the city's history, enhancing public spaces, and encouraging visitors to explore the city, particularly the Niagara River waterfront, Falls Precinct, Cultural District, Third Street Precinct, Pine Avenue, and Main Street. Downriver, the interpretive presentation should support implementation of community and Niagara River Greenway visions of linking communities and open space, enhancing community character, and supporting community downtown districts.

Heritage area-wide interpretive initiatives should coordinate and support individual projects to be undertaken at locations along the river corridor. They should be led by the heritage area's coordinating entity, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission or its successor organization, and its subcommittees and staff.

2.2.1 Implement a Heritage Area-wide Interpretive Presentation

The heritage area should implement an interpretive presentation from the Falls to the Fort based upon the interpretive recommendations and guidelines included in this management plan. Each of the heritage area's key themes and storylines should be interpreted in accordance with the concepts outlined in this chapter.

For each of the interpretive themes, potential projects should be identified, prioritized, and organized based upon:

1. the ability of the project to present the theme and its key stories to visitors,
2. the timing within which the project can be implemented,
3. the capability of the heritage area and its partners to implement the project,
4. cost and the availability of funding, and
5. other potential issues and benefits particular to the project.

Partners who should be involved in the implementation of each project should be identified and engaged. Sources of funding for implementation should be secured, and a process for implementation developed and scheduled. An interpretive plan should be prepared for each interpretive project to be implemented in accordance with the guidelines included in this chapter.

An Interpretive Committee should be created to guide the National Heritage Area's interpretive initiatives. Chapter 7 of the management plan, *Management, Implementation, & Business Plan*, outlines the management structure for the heritage area, including creation of an Interpretive Committee. As envisioned, the Interpretive Committee should be led by Commission members and include representatives from partnering organizations, specifically individuals with professional-level experience in interpretation, public history, local history, and visitor experience.

The Interpretive Committee will be asked to oversee interpretive initiatives that the National Heritage Area leads or that are undertaken by partners with heritage area support. The role of the committee will be to:

- Guide the interpretive planning and implementation process;

- Make sure that the appropriate partners are engaged or consulted in the process;
- Guide interpretive approach, format, communication, and quality;
- Assure the accuracy of interpretive content; and
- Facilitate creation of a high-quality visitor experience.

ACTION: Organize and implement a process for identifying, prioritizing, and phasing implementation of heritage area interpretive projects in accordance with the recommendations and guidelines included in the management plan.

ACTION: Create an Interpretive Committee as a committee of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission to guide heritage area interpretive initiatives.

ACTION: Organize and implement a process for the preparation and review of plans for interpretive projects being undertaken with heritage area organization, funding, or support.

ACTION: Develop and adopt criteria for a quality standards program as discussed in Chapter 3 to include interpretation with benefits such as the availability of grants and technical assistance.

2.2.2 Research and Documentation

In planning for the heritage area, it has been apparent that there is a lack of published histories or historical information that is readily available to the public. This seems surprising given the international recognition and historical significance of Niagara Falls. A few books have been written on the history of the city and Falls, but these are largely popular histories oriented toward entertainment rather than history. Pamphlets have been published on aspects of the region's history and sold in visitor centers and gift shops, but they are limited in the range and detail of subject matter. High quality published material on some subjects is completely lacking.

The history of Niagara Falls and the river corridor is well known to local historians. A great deal of primary and secondary historical information is housed in the Niagara Falls Public Library's Local History Department, a research facility featuring an extensive collection of books, photographs, maps, newspapers, videotapes, scrapbooks, and clipping files about Niagara Falls. Despite the extent and significance of its collection, the Local History Department is under-funded and open only six hours a week. Local historians note that much of the collected material is not yet inventoried or sorted.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should provide leadership in supporting archives on Niagara Falls history, sponsoring research, and making historical information publicly available. The Preferred Alternative states that the heritage area should "assist local partners in establishing and supporting a central database of materials, publications and artifacts related to interpretive subjects and encourage scholarly research."

Consultation should be undertaken with all of the regional archives, including the Niagara County Historical Society, Historical Association of Lewiston, Town of Porter Historical Society, Old Fort Niagara, Niagara University, University at Buffalo, New York State Archives, and others as appropriate. It has been proposed that the Niagara Experience Center, which is being developed by a separate non-profit organization, become a major center for study of the region and for a regional archive. This idea should be developed as planning for the Experience Center proceeds in consultation with other existing archives. It is possible that a network of archives could be created, such as a system of libraries, with the future Niagara Experience Center playing a leadership role. Collections at all of the regional archives should be inventoried and coordinated in a single database available to all, perhaps using the internet.

The future roles and relationships between regional archives, including the Niagara Experience Center should be reviewed. The Niagara Falls Public Library's Local History Department should continue to be the central archive and repository for historical information and archival collections on the Niagara Falls region. A needs assessment should be undertaken to determine how best to support the library and its staff and to inventory, care for its collection, and make it more widely available. Based upon the assessment, a plan should be developed that can be phased in over time, and a regular funding stream should be established for its implementation.

The plan should address undertaking a comprehensive inventory of the library's existing collection, appropriate conservation and care of the collection, preparation of a publicly accessible bibliography, and increased public access. Additional primary historical materials that might be available within the region should be identified and steps taken for their preservation. Collections within the New York state archives should be recorded. Information on the library's collection should be made available online. At a minimum, an annotated bibliography with descriptions of materials in the collection should be posted. Over time, key items within the collection should be digitized and made available.

ACTION: Consult with existing regional archives on an approach for creating and supporting a central single archive on the history and culture of Niagara Falls and the lower river as well as a network of regional archives working in collaboration.

ACTION: Collaborate with the Niagara Falls Public Library in preparing and implementing a plan to support the library as a central archive and repository for historical information and collections on the Niagara Falls region.

ACTION: Create a network of regional archives at existing libraries, historical societies, and other sites. Outline the roles that existing archives are willing and capable of playing in the vision for a collaborative regional archival network.

ACTION: Undertake mutually agreed-upon actions to strengthen and support the network of regional archives including such projects as completing an inventory and review of documents, processes for care of archives, creating a bibliography and summary of documents, and making archives accessible, including posting of information online.

ACTION: Work with the board and planners of the Niagara Experience Center on its possible role as a central archival resource working in collaboration with the regional archival network.

The heritage area should collaborate with the Niagara County Historical Society, Niagara University, Niagara County Community College, Historical Association of Lewiston, Town of Porter Historical Society, Old Fort Niagara, county and municipal historians, and others as appropriate in developing a research program for local history. A Committee of Historians should be created to advise the heritage area on historical subjects and issues related to research. A subgroup of the Committee could serve as a resource to assist the Interpretive Committee in reviewing the accuracy of interpretive content prepared for heritage area interpretive exhibits. Minimum credentials for committee members should be established. The Committee should include both subject matter experts to review the accuracy of content as well as experienced interpreters to address how the content is presented. All exhibits implemented under the heritage area program and with heritage area support should undergo Committee review for the accuracy of interpretation.

ACTION: Establish a Committee of Historians to advise the heritage area on historical subjects and issues related to research.

The Committee of Historians should oversee the development or adoption of a research protocol to guide historians undertaking research on behalf of the heritage area. The research protocol should outline standards and guidelines for undertaking research, identifying source information, using electronic formats, and presentation of research papers. The protocol should follow the standards of the historical profession.

ACTION: Develop or adopt a research protocol to guide historians undertaking research on behalf of the heritage area and its partners.

The heritage area and its partners should implement a research program using professional historians, local avocational historians, and students. Through the library and historical society, a bibliography of existing histories and research papers should be compiled. Historic context statements should be prepared on primary topics to help guide research and to provide an historical overview for detailed subject matter. Gaps in research should be identified in a catalogue of research needs. Gaps in research may exist both due to a lack of research and the developing quality of existing research. Priorities for research should be established and specific research problems and topics identified and described.

The heritage area should sponsor a long term program of ongoing research using professional and qualified avocational historians and concentrating upon context statements, primary research topics, and information needed to support interpretation. The historical societies should be encouraged to engage and coordinate local avocational historians in assisting with the heritage area research program. The Niagara County Community College and Niagara University should be encouraged to develop a regular program of student research on specific detailed topics of interest. Student research should be mentored and publicly acknowledged to help make it a meaningful and rewarding experience. A similar program should be developed for high school and middle school honors students as part of the heritage area's engagement of local youth.

ACTION: Develop and implement a coordinated, long term program of research into the history of the Niagara Falls region through a collaboration of partnering organizations. Organize, coordinate, and support research by professional historians, local avocational historians, and students.

As part of a broader strategy of communications, the heritage area should encourage the publication of new books and articles on Niagara Falls history. Consideration should be given to undertaking publication of a comprehensive history of Niagara Falls which could be divided into several volumes and accompanied by a video documentary. Relationships should be developed with historical magazines such as *Smithsonian*, *American Heritage*, and *American History* so that articles on various aspects of Niagara Falls history can be featured in magazines and on websites on a regular basis. Books, ebooks, and articles should be well illustrated with historical sketches, photographs, and maps. The heritage area's program of research can serve as an incubator for such articles.

ACTION: As part of a broader communications plan, encourage the publication of new books and articles on Niagara Falls history.

2.2.3 Heritage Area Identity

The identity and brand to be used by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area supports interpretation by creating a visual impression with visitors that is recognizable and immediately communicates a sense of quality and expectation. Heritage area identity and branding is discussed in Chapter 3 of this plan, *Niagara's Visitor Experience*, including recommendations for the use of the heritage area brand as a means of establishing standards of quality.

From an interpretive perspective, the heritage area's identity should be used for design elements associated with interpretive exhibits, wayfinding, publications, website, and others media formats and materials presenting interpretive content. Design associated with the heritage area's identity and brand should be coordinated with signage design being implemented by the Niagara River Greenway. As this management plan is being prepared, wayfinding signage for Niagara Falls State Park is being designed consistent with the design of wayfinding signage being installed at Greenway sites in Buffalo and Erie County. As part of the heritage area identity, wayfinding signage, interpretive exhibit carriers, and graphic formats that are compatible with the state parks and Greenway designs should be developed.

ACTION: Incorporate interpretive elements such as exhibit carriers, wayfinding signage, and graphic formats in the family of items that are part of the heritage area identity and brand. Provide design guidelines and guidelines for usage.

ACTION: Use the heritage area's identity and design elements to convey the level of quality that can be expected from heritage area interpretive presentations.

2.2.4 Heritage Area Website

A new Niagara Falls National Heritage Area website should be created focusing upon visitor information, opportunities for exploration, and interpretive content. Partnership, management, historic preservation, and stewardship interests of the heritage area should also be met. The website should use the heritage area's graphic identity and brand and is further discussed in Chapter 3, *Niagara's Visitor Experience*.

There are a number of existing websites that feature Niagara Falls and its visitor attractions including those for the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC), Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce, state parks, and individual attractions. In addition, the National Park Service manages a website at www.nps.gov/nifa featuring the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. This website is well designed and can continue to be used, though as part of a government system it has some limitations. The NPS website should link closely to a new heritage area website to be created by the Commission.

The new heritage area website should not compete with the existing websites of its partners but should complement and link with them. Unlike existing websites, the heritage area website is less about individual attractions and services and more about the heritage area's themes, landscapes, and communities. The website's principal mission is to 1) present the larger story of Niagara Falls as represented through its interpretive themes, 2) orient visitors to opportunities, and 3) encourage visitors to explore when they come. Good, solid orientation materials are a necessity for the heritage area website in helping visitors understand the heritage area's small size and ease of accessibility.

Website interpretation should engage potential visitors and encourage them to visit in new ways. Interpretation should be used as the website's basic organizing concept. The website should present Niagara's themes and stories, clearly stating its significance on its home page and weaving its stories throughout subsequent sections. Each key interpretive theme should be presented along with the places where the theme is represented and interpreted within the heritage area. Suggested driving, biking, and walking tours should be presented along with maps, visitor information, and interpretive content. Historic photographs and historic maps keyed to specific places should be liberally used for illustration. Audio tours should be provided that can be downloaded to a variety of formats and used during visits. An application for smartphones use should be developed and coordinated with the website to provide visitor information, maps, written and audio tours, and interpretive content. Information about the heritage area's transportation network should be featured.

The heritage area landscape should be presented in a holistic fashion, delineating its organizing elements and emphasizing linkages and connections. Segments of the landscape could be detailed to facilitate

exploration by visitors: LaSalle, the upper river, the Falls and Falls Street, the gorge, Power Vista, greater Lewiston, Youngstown and Old Fort Niagara, regional connections. Opportunities for exploration such as trails, walks, drives, landscape features, landscape exhibits, attractions, and community facilities should be clearly presented. Locations where visitor services can be found, such as Lower Falls Street, Third Street, Lewiston, and Youngstown, should be highlighted, but detailed information on lodging, dining, and visitor services should be referred to the NTCC and Niagara River Region websites.

Website links to the Niagara Falls Public Library, Niagara County Historical Society, Old Fort Niagara, Castellani Art Museum, and other partners should be made to provide access to research papers and studies on Niagara Falls history for students and individuals seeking detailed information. Access to information on environmental topics should be organized through other partners, such as the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper. The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area website should be used as an interpretive medium to provide rich content that will inform internet visitors about the history of the region.

ACTION: Create a heritage area website to present the Niagara Falls story as represented through its interpretive themes and to encourage visitors to explore when they come.

ACTION: Use the heritage area website to provide detailed information that will facilitate orientation and exploration, including maps, tours, guides, and interpretive content.

ACTION: Coordinate content and use of the new heritage area website with that of the National Park Service website so that the two complement and are consistent with each other.

ACTION: Create audio tours that can be downloaded from the website and coordinate the website.

ACTION: Develop a creative, fun, and user friendly smartphone application to provide a wide range of information and interpretive content for visitors.

ACTION: Use the heritage area website to provide access to articles, research papers, historic maps, and photographs for use by students and others seeking detailed information about Niagara Falls, its history, and its landscape.

2.2.5 Heritage Area Publications and Media

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should prepare a family of coordinated interpretive publications to support presentation of the heritage area's interpretive themes and stories to visitors. The family of publications should use the heritage area's graphic identity, should be available for downloading from the heritage area website, and should be available through and supplemented by interpretive content provided in other media formats. All publications may be produced in both print and electronic formats.

The following range of publications is suggested for consideration. Publications prepared by partners such as Old Fort Niagara on specific topics should also be included and promoted. Additional publications and formats should be considered, tested, supported, and developed over time.

- **Regional interpretive brochure** introducing the heritage area from a regional perspective and connecting the bounded portion of the heritage area along the river and falls to thematically related sites in other portions of Niagara and Erie Counties.
- **Heritage area brochure** presenting the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area within its bounded area, introducing its interpretive themes, and suggesting opportunities for visitors to explore.
- **Large fold-out map** of the heritage area from LaSalle along the Upper Niagara River to Old Fort Niagara depicting the landscape, communities, trails, walking tours, visitor facilities, and

locations where interpretation is offered. Interpretive content supporting presentations at sites and within the landscape should also be presented on the map.

- **Regional interpretive guide** as a pamphlet or fold-out map featuring tours and itineraries related to heritage area themes connecting sites in Niagara and Erie Counties.
- **Individual brochures for each theme** presenting the theme along with related stories and subject matter. Each brochure should include a map showing the places where site or landscape interpretation of that theme is offered. Brochures should focus upon the river and falls but also identify thematically related sites in Niagara and Erie Counties.
- **Interpretive guides for each theme** should be prepared presenting interpretative content in additional detail. *The Power Trail*, *Seige-1759*, *The Campaign Against Niagara*, and *A History and Guide to Old Fort Niagara* are examples of guides that could be used and that could serve as models for guides developed for other themes and subjects.
- **Junior Rangers Booklet** supporting the heritage area's Junior Ranger Program and providing activities and interpretive content for young people.
- **Audio and video presentations** on subjects related to various heritage area themes.
- **Trails guide** for the walking and hiking trails along the river and gorge from LaSalle to the Fort. The state park has an existing brochure for the Niagara Gorge trail system, but a more extensive trail guide should be prepared that maps the landscape and trails in detail, provides information for hikers, and presents interpretation of the natural history and ecosystems along the river and gorge. The trails guide should connect to trails and walks within the city and in the communities of Lewiston and Youngstown.
- **Media Applications** should be used to make interpretive content and orientation information available in as many ways as possible using applications, podcasts, Facebook, and other social media.

ACTION: Create a family of coordinated interpretive publications to support presentation of the heritage area's interpretive themes and stories to visitors. The family of publications may include a variety of media and graphic formats and should be introduced over time beginning with the publications that will be most useful to visitors.

ACTION: Coordinate the family of interpretive publications with those of partnering sites and organizations that interpret heritage area themes.

2.2.6 Interpretive Center and Orientation

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should create a network of facilities introducing visitors to heritage area themes and stories and orienting them toward interpretive opportunities within the heritage area's landscapes and communities.

The premier interpretive facility for the heritage area should be the planned Niagara Experience Center, a world class regional attraction to be located adjacent to Niagara Falls State Park. The Niagara Experience Center is being undertaken by Niagara Experience Center, Inc., an independent non-profit organization with a Board of Directors of cultural, educational, and civic leaders from the regional community. The Experience Center will feature the latest in immersive 'experience design' and yet be grounded in scholarship and authenticity. It is planned to include a scholarly research center and archive, discussed above. Interpretively, the Niagara Experience Center will introduce the heritage area's principal themes, dramatically illustrate the context for what we see today, and serve as the gateway to other interpretive opportunities, encouraging visitors to explore the river corridor and experience the authentic landscapes it interprets.

The Niagara Experience Center will be the focal point of a re-envisioned downtown as outlined in the City of Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan. Planning for the Experience Center is underway, and it has been identified as a featured project in New York's 2011 *Western New York Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan*. Phase 1 of the project includes site acquisition, design, and site preparation.

Implementation of the Niagara Experience Center is a long-term project that will require significant fundraising and community support. The heritage area should closely coordinate with, partner with, and support its development. For the medium term, the heritage area should consider developing an interim central Interpretive Center in the vicinity of Old Falls Street and Rainbow Boulevard. The central Interpretive Center should feature high quality interpretive exhibits that introduce the heritage area's key themes and stories and encourage visitors to explore the authentic places along the river corridor where those themes are presented and interpreted in more detail. It could be located in the downtown Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation's visitors center or in another suitable location.

The Interpretive Center should also serve as a transportation hub, providing visitors access to walking and hiking trails, bicycles and biking trails, rental cars, driving routes, guided tours, and visitor shuttles serving the heritage area corridor. While the Interpretive Center will provide information about exploring the heritage area, it will not focus upon other types of visitor attractions and services and is not a replacement for the existing visitor center.

Working with community partners, identify locations in Lewiston and Youngstown that can serve as orientation centers for the heritage area. As outlined in Chapter 3, orientation centers should offer brochure racks and orientation exhibits with visitor information, focusing upon local visitor opportunities and relating them to the heritage area as a whole. The orientation centers should also feature interpretive exhibits introducing heritage area themes, particularly those themes of local significance. These community orientation centers are anticipated to be located in partners' facilities and staffed by partnering organizations.

In addition to the Interpretation Center in Niagara Falls and two orientation centers in Lewiston and Youngstown, outdoor orientation exhibits or kiosks should be installed at key locations along the entire length of the heritage area, from LaSalle on the south to Old Fort Niagara on the north. The size and scope of the orientation exhibits may vary depending upon the location. The exhibits should be a component of the heritage area's identity, branding, and signage standards. Each exhibit should feature a map of the heritage area showing trails and linkages, and identifying interpretive opportunities. The heritage area's interpretive themes should be introduced, and detailed information may be provided on visitor opportunities in the vicinity. Orientation exhibits should be located outside of the Interpretive Center, orientation centers, and primary visitor attractions to serve visitors during times when the facilities are closed.

ACTION: Create a network of facilities introducing visitors to heritage area themes and stories and orienting them toward interpretive opportunities within the heritage area's landscapes and communities.

ACTION: Collaborate with partners in developing a primary Interpretive Center adjacent to Niagara Falls State Park to attract visitors and encourage them to explore the river corridor. Over the long term, work to develop the Niagara Experience Center as the primary interpretive center. In the interim, a smaller Interpretive Center should be implemented in the vicinity of Old Falls Street and Rainbow Boulevard.

ACTION: Working with community partners, establish orientation centers in Lewiston and Youngstown presenting the heritage area, introducing interpretive themes, and orienting visitors to interpretive opportunities.

ACTION: Create outdoor orientation exhibits or kiosks at key locations along the river corridor presenting the heritage area, introducing its themes, and orienting visitors to interpretive opportunities.

2.2.7 Interpretive Guides and Living History

A means of providing a high quality interpretive experience is through personal interpretation offered by experienced guides and living history interpreters. Several partners within the heritage area currently feature personal interpretation. Old Fort Niagara, with its dramatic stories of military life and action, uses living history interpreters in military, civilian, and Native American character to provide memorable experiences for visitors. Niagara Falls State Park employs costumed interpreters depicting Nicola Testa and daredevils Annie Edson Taylor and The Great Blondin. The Lewiston Council of the Arts offers its popular Marble Orchard Ghost Walks featuring lively characters from the community's past. Local tour operators use local historians and themed interpreters as step-on guides for visiting tour buses. In collaboration with these and other partners, the heritage area should develop an organized group of guides and living history interpreters that can work within the heritage area.

A Certified Guides Program should be developed as a component of the Ambassador Program discussed in Chapter 3. Individuals who wish to become certified guides should undergo training and be provided with an historical interpretative manual on themes and stories associated with the heritage area and its sites. Once the individuals pass a test on their knowledge of interpretive content and hospitality skills, they would become certified heritage area guides and be provided with certification documents, badges, jackets, or other identifiable items. The heritage area and its partners would call upon the guides to provide interpretive services at sites, during events, as step-on guides, to groups, and as personal services to visitors. Guides could be employed at the heritage area's Interpretive Center and their services could be marketed and made available to visitors, tour groups, and tour operators.

The services of qualified Living History Interpreters could be organized through partnering sites, local acting groups, or re-enacting organizations, or they could be organized by retaining interpreters on an individual basis. The program should collaborate with but not interfere with existing living history arrangements at sites such as Old Fort Niagara. Many Living History Interpreters provide their own authentic costumes and are qualified to represent their character within the context of the heritage area's themes and stories. The heritage area's Interpretive Committee, however, should designate individuals to oversee quality control with respect to authenticity and interpretive capabilities. It may be desirable to develop a costume collection which Living History Interpreters can use. Similar to the Certified Guides, the Living History Interpreters would be called upon to provide interpretive services related to their characters at sites, during events, as step-on guides, to groups, and as personal services to visitors.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should become renowned for the organization, scope, and quality of its Certified Guide and Living History Programs. Because personal interpretive services require no infrastructure, it is a step that can be taken for early implementation to begin creating an engaging and high quality heritage area-wide interpretive experience.

ACTION: Create a Certified Guides Program of qualified individuals who can serve as guides to the heritage area and provide high quality interpretation in a variety of formats for visitors. Develop background materials, a certification process, and ongoing quality control measures to assure the level of quality desired.

ACTION: Work with partnering organizations to create a qualified troupe of Living History Interpreters representing heritage area themes and stories and who can perform and animate sites and locations throughout the heritage area. Develop background materials, costume support, a certification process, and ongoing quality control measures to assure the level of quality desired.

2.2.8 Public Art

Public art should play a central role in the interpretive experience of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area and should be organized in collaboration with the Niagara Arts and Cultural Center. The heritage area should become known for the manner and extent in which art is used to interpret themes and stories and to enhance community landscapes.

As a component of the heritage area's identity and brand, a family of custom designed markers, exhibit carriers, kiosks, and signage types should be created for use throughout the heritage area. Design guidelines and standards should be created for the family of elements, which should have a high standard of design and craftsmanship and convey a sense of public art. As discussed above under heritage area identity and in Chapter 3 relative to wayfinding, the design standards should be compatible with other related signage and wayfinding initiatives, such as those implemented by the Greenway and state parks, and should be distinctive to the heritage area. Interpretive exhibits and signage sponsored, supported, or promoted by the heritage area should be implemented using the heritage area design standards and guidelines.

[Insert images with examples of custom exhibit carriers – Morris and Tyler Arboretums, Erie Canal Harbor waysides.]

Landscape interpretation of heritage area themes as presented below in this chapter should be undertaken through the installation of interpretive artwork, supplementing the use of more traditional exhibits, to the maximum extent possible. Public art has the ability to convey interpretive meaning simply through its visual character and without the use of words and text. When combined with more traditional exhibits, it provides a unique and powerful interpretive experience that will set the Niagara presentation apart and support its world class reputation.

[Insert sidebar with images and descriptions of examples of public art used for interpretation – Lincoln Highway murals and giants, Erie Canal Harbor, Morristown sculptures, others]

Public art can provide landscape enhancement to streetscapes, parks, and other public spaces. It can be designed to attract attention and draw visitors from a distance or to blend into a landscape context as a delightful discovery. Businesses can use interpretive artwork outside and inside their establishments to coordinate with and support the heritage area experience.

The character and appearance of the heritage area landscape is different than it was during many of the historical periods being interpreted through heritage area themes. For instance, the location and extent of the hydraulic canal and the power plant and industries it served is difficult to envision today. Artwork can be used in the contemporary landscape as 'placemakers' or markers to delineate the location and layout of lost features such as the canal so that visitors can visualize and feel their physical presence and appreciate their scale and relationships. Public art is a means through which interpretive content can be conveyed in a unique fashion which enhances the landscape and limits the need for signage.

ACTION: As a component of the heritage area's brand and identity, develop design guidelines for a family of exhibit carriers, kiosks, and signage types with a high level of design quality for use throughout the heritage area.

ACTION: Use public art to convey interpretive content in heritage area landscape presentations to the maximum extent possible.

ACTION: Prepare a comprehensive plan outlining opportunities for public art allowing for targeting of projects and attraction of artists. Include public art in interpretive plans prepared for exhibit presentations.

ACTION: Use public art as 'placemakers' within the landscape to support interpretation and help visitors visualize the location, extent, and character of landscape features that are no longer existing.

2.2.9 Programming and Events

Public programming and events play an important role in attracting visitors to Niagara Falls communities and attractions. The City of Niagara Falls and USA Niagara sponsor a year-long series of events along Old Falls Street that are managed under contract by Global Spectrum. The Village of Lewiston hosts a full schedule of public events in its Center Street business district many weekends. Artpark and Company, Inc. in Earl W. Brydges Artpark State Park, adjacent to Lewiston, is renowned for its concerts, shows, and family events. A new outdoor amphitheater is planned that will improve facilities and services for visitors. Old Fort Niagara presents a series of high quality public events related to its historical interpretation during the visitor season.

The heritage area should collaborate closely with communities and attractions to support, enhance, and help coordinate events heritage area-wide. The heritage area should serve as a forum for coordinating and scheduling events so that they expand opportunities, reinforce each other, and limit unnecessary conflicts and competition. The heritage area can play a strong role in enhancing events through grants and interpretive programming. Regionally, the heritage area should coordinate with communities, organizations, and attractions to coordinate and promote events and public programming.

ACTION: Support interpretive programming offered by partnering communities and sites through a competitive interpretive programming and events matching grant program. Use the grants program to encourage and support high standards of quality.

ACTION: Work with partnering communities and sites to coordinate a heritage area-wide calendar of events that creates synergism, limits undesired competition, and encourages exploration and visitation throughout the corridor.

ACTION: Collaborate with partners on a regional basis to coordinate and promote events for visitors in Niagara and Erie Counties based upon heritage area related themes.

2.3 Natural Phenomenon

The theme *Natural Phenomenon* interprets the natural history of the Niagara Falls, River, and Gorge. It includes presentation of the region's geology, the hydrologic processes that have created the Falls and gorge, and the river corridor and Lake Ontario ecosystems with their distinctive plant and animal communities. Interpretation should describe the changes that have occurred to the landscape over time, including changes experienced through human development over the past three hundred years. It should conclude with presentation and understanding of the landscape today and its stewardship and conservation into the future.

Natural Phenomenon is a theme that should be attractive to all audiences visiting the Falls. It provides the context for understanding and appreciating the spectacular experience of the Falls and should be used to

engage all visitors. It will be attractive to a range of niche audiences as well, including botanists, birders, fishermen, hikers, and others. Interpretation should be designed to support the heritage area's educational curriculum for students and local youth.

This interpretive theme will be interpreted in the necklace of state parks, local parks, and public spaces that border the Niagara River from LaSalle on the south to Fort Niagara State Park on the north. It will build upon and enhance existing interpretive programs and presentations already being offered by the New York State Parks system. It should feature interpretation at Niagara Falls State Park, the State Park's Discovery Center, and Joseph Davis State Park. It should include creative and engaging interpretation offered along the region's extensive trail systems, encouraging visitors to explore by foot and by bicycle. Active recreation should be a central component of its implementation and will support the vision outlined in the Niagara River Greenway Plan.

ACTION: Interpret the heritage area theme *Natural Phenomenon* through high quality exhibits, artwork, and programming in a manner that creates a world class visitor experience and enhances landscape and community character.

2.3.1 Theme Statements

Primary Theme:

Natural Phenomenon

Niagara Falls is a natural phenomenon that is overwhelming in its magnitude and deeply embedded in popular consciousness. Over Niagara Falls courses the outflow of four of the Great Lakes. The distinctive characteristics of the Niagara Falls region can only be understood through appreciation of this unparalleled resource and the geological processes that form it. (Paraphrased from the Feasibility Study)

Secondary Themes:

Geological Forces

Formed 450 million years ago from layers of sand, silt, and clay, the Niagara Escarpment is an extensive landform visible as a line of steep slopes and long bluffs extending from New York State through Ontario, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois. The Niagara Gorge is the channel cut through the escarpment by the Niagara River over time, and Niagara Falls is the present location of that erosive action. The Niagara Falls and Gorge may be the Escarpment's best known landscape features.

Unique Ecosystems

The microclimates and environmental conditions created by the Niagara River and Gorge support a unique range of plant and animal ecosystems.

Changes in the Landscape

Human activity has dramatically altered the landscape in the vicinity of the Niagara River over the past 300 years and with it the nature and extent of the vegetation that occurs here. Haudenosaunee concepts of land use differed dramatically from those of European settlers. Today, only small, isolated remnants of the region's pre-settlement plant communities remain.

Landscape Stewardship

Beginning with the 'Free Niagara' movement of the 1870s that led to creation of the Niagara Reservation, conservation and stewardship of the Niagara River landscape has attracted strong public interest and action. That interest continues today and takes inspiration from the views of the Haudenosaunee.

2.3.2 Interpretive Concepts, Locations, and Ideas

The following concepts provide a basis for interpretation of the theme *Natural Phenomenon* within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. See **Figure 2-1**.

- Introduce the primary theme at the heritage area's proposed **Interpretive Center** and provide visitors with information on opportunities for exploration.
- Interpret themes and stories related to *Natural Phenomenon* along a **continuous trail system** in the **necklace of state parks, local parks, and public spaces** that border the Niagara River from LaSalle on the south to Fort Niagara State Park on the north.
- Build upon the **existing interpretive programs** offered by New York State Parks and its partners.
- Niagara Falls State Park is undertaking redesign of interpretive exhibits in the **Niagara Gorge Discovery Center** focusing upon geology and related topics.
- Niagara Falls State Park is working to rehabilitate the **historic park landscape**, rehabilitate and open existing trails, and construct new trail connections and trailheads.
- New York State Parks is collaborating with the Town of Lewiston, and the Audubon Society to preserve and enhance **Joseph Davis State Park** for bird habitat and natural ecosystems.
- Support and help implement the Niagara River **Greenway's vision** for a trail system along the entire length of the Niagara River from LaSalle and Cayuga Island to Fort Niagara and Four Mile Creek State Parks.
- In collaboration with partners, plan, design, and install a **comprehensive network of landscape exhibits** interpreting themes, stories, and subjects related to *Natural Phenomenon* along the river corridor's continuous trail system. Use the interpretive exhibit design standards developed as part of the heritage area's identity and branding along with customized exhibits and public art designed to blend into the fabric of the landscape.

[Insert sidebar with examples of interpretive exhibits that are designed to blend into the character of the natural landscape, minimizing visual clutter from signage.]

- Publish a range of **interpretive materials** supporting interpretation of *Natural Phenomenon* using a variety of formats and media platforms. Consider including a themed brochure, large fold-out map, interpretive guides, detailed trails guide, smartphone applications, and downloadable audio tours.
- Offer a range of **personal tours, hikes, and interpretive programs** building upon existing programming. Supplement existing programming with the assistance of qualified individuals associated with the heritage area's Certified Guides program. Aggressively market interpretive opportunities in pre-visit information.
- Coordinate interpretive programming with **environmental education** aspects of the National Heritage Area's educational and community engagement initiatives outlined in Chapter 4.

2.3.3 Primary Partners

The following heritage area partners are expected to play primary roles in the planning and implementation of interpretation of *Natural Phenomenon*.

- **New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Western District, Niagara Region (New York State Parks)** – manages the state parks along the Niagara River and provides a variety of visitor services including interpretation to the public.
- **Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and Staff** – should offer funding and technical support as requested by partner organizations for their initiatives as they relate to heritage area development where partners are leading initiatives and should provide leadership in planning and implementing initiatives where the National Heritage Area is leading.
- **Niagara River Greenway Commission and NYPA-funded Standing Committees** – should support implementation of trail interpretation as priority projects implementing the Greenway Plan.
- **Town of Lewiston and Audubon Society** – should continue to implement their plans for Joseph Davis State Park in partnership with New York State Parks.
- **Tuscarora Nation** – should assist with concepts on interpretation of the natural environment, coordinating with interpretation described under the storyline *The Western Door*, discussed below.
- **Niagara Arts and Cultural Center** – should assist partners in working with artists in developing concepts for interpretation appropriate to the character of the landscape context.
- **Environmental Organizations** – should consult and advise in the layout and development of interpretive presentation on natural phenomenon.

2.3.4 Implementation and Phasing

Interpretation of the theme *Natural Phenomenon* should be undertaken as a **priority project** of the heritage area. This theme underlies interpretation of all of the other heritage area themes and is most directly related to the experience of the Falls. Interpretation is presented within the state parks where visitors are already found and can be phased in beginning immediately, building upon and enhancing existing park programming.

The state park's trail system is the backbone of both the Greenway Plan and the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. Current projects being implemented by State Parks will significantly improve trail access and the quality of the visitor experience. Other key projects at the Discovery Center and Joseph Davis State Park are also in progress. The possible removal or reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway will create new opportunities for connecting city neighborhoods to the park and gorge.

The following steps should be undertaken for implementation.

1. Consult with partners on **process and roles**. Offer to provide funding and/or technical support to partner initiated projects, when possible, that meet National Heritage Area goals.
2. Identify potential **early action projects** that can be undertaken to interpret *Natural Phenomenon* along the river corridor. In particular, support existing programming being offered by State Parks

staff through marketing and promotion, assistance with organization and coordination, providing additional staff support, providing support materials, and targeted funding.

3. Prepare a comprehensive **interpretive plan** for the theme *Natural Phenomenon*. In collaboration with partners, identify themes, stories, and subjects to be interpreted at various locations. Conceptually design exhibit ideas that (1) are appropriate to and blend into the landscape context, (2) represent the world class quality expected of the Falls, (3) do not detract from the natural experience, and (4) are consistent with partner's interests and processes. Identify locations for specific exhibits along with key messages and guidelines for implementation. Outline costs and priorities for phasing.
4. Initiate new interpretive programming not tied to specific locations, such as **smartphone applications** that interpret the gorge and lower river's natural history and environment.
5. Identify and secure **funding** and obtain necessary **approvals** for implementation of Phase 1 of the interpretive plan.
6. Prepare construction documents and **undertake implementation** of Phase 1 work.
7. Continue to develop and enhance **interpretive programming** in collaboration with partners.

2.4 Tourism and Recreation

The theme *Tourism and Recreation* explores the development of Niagara Falls as a cultural symbol and tourist attraction. It encompasses a history of tourism that extends from early European and American encounters with the Falls to the growth of mass tourism, the honeymoon phenomenon, and modern efforts to revitalize the City of Niagara Falls. This theme describes the traditions of outrageous behavior at the Falls, such as high-wire acts and going over the Falls in a barrel. It explores the excesses of commercialism that helped spark Frederic Law Olmsted-led efforts to protect what has become today's Niagara Falls State Park. New York State's example helped to build momentum for the creation, in other parts of the United States, of the National Parks System. Niagara Falls, however, remains a state park.

Tourism and Recreation is a theme that ties the City of Niagara Falls to the falls and the park. It should engage visitors and draw them into the downtown area. *Tourism and Recreation* portrays the changing relationships and responses of the city to the falls and to the tourism it generates. It continues to be relevant today in the city's ongoing program of revitalization and renewal.

This interpretive theme will be presented in downtown Niagara Falls, focusing upon Old Falls Street and Rainbow Boulevard, where the city's commercial area for tourists has historically been located. Landscape exhibits along the streetscape, in public places, and incorporated into new commercial projects will be the primary means of interpretation. It will include a significant investment in public art enhancing the downtown area and presenting various aspects of the theme and its stories. It will directly support the City of Niagara Falls' vision for the Falls Precinct outlined in the city's 2009 Comprehensive Plan.

ACTION: Interpret the heritage area theme *Tourism and Recreation* through high quality exhibits, artwork, and programming in a manner that creates a world class visitor experience and enhances landscape and community character.

2.4.1 Theme Statements

Primary Theme:

Tourism and Recreation

Niagara Falls has been an international cultural icon with different meaning and significance to different people over time.

Secondary Themes:

Wilderness and the American Experience

From their first encounters with the Falls until well into the 19th century, Europeans and their American descendents beheld Niagara with awe, perceiving it as an outstanding expression of the “sublime.” To these early visitors the spectacle was emblematic of the New World, in which everything appeared outsized and limitless. Niagara exemplified the concept of wilderness, with the grandeur and terror it represented.

A Magnet for Visitors

Niagara Falls has been a favored destination of travelers for two centuries and is representative of the evolution of tourism in the nation as a whole.

Honeymoon Capital

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Niagara Falls became known as the Honeymoon Capital of the World. Thousands of newlyweds made the ritual pilgrimage to the Falls to inaugurate their lives together.

Commercial Exploitation and Sensationalism

Even in its earliest incarnation, commercialism at Niagara Falls took on a seamy and aggressive tone. Unscrupulous entrepreneurs on both sides of the river competed with each other in cutthroat fashion in attracting and extracting money from unwary visitors. The tasteless and sensational nature of the commercial exploitation took on a life of its own.

Daredevils

Contributing to the sensational spectacle were individuals who undertook life-threatening feats and dangerous publicity stunts. Tight-rope walking and descending the Falls in a barrel were most prominent among the ways that publicity seekers sought public attention and acclaim.

Creating the Niagara Reservation

Niagara emerged as a major battleground between divergent visions of the value and meaning of the Falls and the natural environment in general. Educated, urban, and progressive forces battled to protect the integrity of the natural wonder in the face of economic exploitation by tourism, manufacturing, and hydropower generation. The Niagara Reservation was created in 1883 as the first state park, an early triumph of the American conservation movement, and a major influence on the creation of national parks.

2.4.2 Interpretive Concepts, Locations, and Ideas

The following concepts provide a basis for interpretation of the theme *Tourism and Recreation* within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. See **Figure 2-2**.

- Introduce the primary theme at the heritage area's proposed **Interpretive Center** and provide visitors with information on opportunities for exploration.
- Interpret themes and stories related to *Tourism and Recreation* in downtown Niagara Falls, particularly in the **vicinity of Old Falls Street and Rainbow Boulevard**, which was the center of the city's commercial area catering to tourists.

- Through the interpretive presentation support implementation of the City of Niagara Falls 2009 **Comprehensive Plan** for the Falls Precinct and revitalization projects being undertaken by USA Niagara and other partners.
- Build upon the **existing projects** being undertaken by the City of Niagara Falls, USA Niagara, and other partners. Use new projects as a means to implement elements of the interpretive presentation.
- In collaboration with partners, plan, design, and install a **visually stimulating network of streetscape exhibits** interpreting the themes, stories, and subjects related to *Tourism and Recreation* within the Falls District of downtown Niagara falls. Use the interpretive exhibit standards developed as part of the heritage area's identity and branding along with public art and interactive exhibits designed to engage visitors and visually enhance the streetscape.

[Insert sidebar of possible ideas for exhibits and public art: High wire act above the street; etc.]

- Coordinate with **existing venues** such as the Daredevil Museum in presenting interpretation. Work on having consistent quality control and in establishing interpretive connections to other sites.
- Publish **interpretive materials** supporting interpretation of *Tourism and Recreation* using a variety of formats and media platforms. Consider including a themed brochure, interpretive guide, and downloadable audio tour.
- Support the year-long **program of public events** conducted along Old Falls Street. Develop special events specifically related to the theme *Tourism and Recreation* as well as presentations on the theme offered as a part of existing events.
- Offer walking tours conducted by the heritage area's Certified Guides on the theme *Tourism and Recreation*.

2.4.3 Primary Partners

The following heritage area partners are expected to play primary roles in the planning and implementation of interpretation of *Tourism and Recreation*.

- **City of Niagara Falls** – incorporating interpretation of the theme into the redevelopment strategy for the Falls Precinct and downtown.
- **USA Niagara** – incorporating interpretation into projects it is undertaking within the Falls Precinct and leading a project preparing an interpretive plan and implementing interpretive exhibits and public art along the streetscapes of the Falls Precinct.
- **Niagara Arts and Cultural Center** – working with USA Niagara and the city to attract artists, develop ideas, and create guidelines for public art interpreting the theme.
- **Global Spectrum and Subsequent Events Contractors** – incorporating interpretation, performances, and programming related to the theme into events conducted along Old Fall Street.

- **NCCC Culinary Institute and Hospitality and Tourism Center** – participating in programming and interpretation along Old Falls Street.
- **Local Businesses within the Falls Precinct** – developing interpretation within and outside of their businesses, such as the Daredevil Museum, in coordination with the heritage area presentation.
- **Niagara University Tourism Heritage Institute** – the institute, a proposed action within the management plan, could assist with planning and implementation of interpretation of this theme.
- **Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and Staff** – should provide leadership in planning and implementation of the work and in the accuracy and quality control of exhibits.

2.4.4 Implementation and Phasing

Interpretation of the theme *Tourism and Recreation* should be undertaken as a **priority project** because it can be coordinated with and incorporated into ongoing initiatives. Old Falls Street has been rehabilitated in recent years and is currently a focus of public events that attract visitors and residents. New infrastructure and development projects are ongoing under the leadership of the city, USA Niagara, and other partners. There is tremendous opportunity for engaging the private sector in these initiatives. Interpretation will support revitalization by enhancing the streetscape and the visitor experience.

The design and implementation of interpretive exhibits can be undertaken both as a component of new projects and as a separate project implemented along Old Falls Street and other revitalized streets within the Falls Precinct. An interpretive plan must first be developed describing a core interpretive presentation and guidelines for exhibits and public art. Exhibits may then be installed in a flexible and phased manner as projects and funding permit.

The following steps should be undertaken for implementation.

- **Identify ongoing and future projects** into which interpretation and public art can be incorporated.
- Prepare an **interpretive plan** for the theme *Tourism and Recreation* to be implemented within the Falls Precinct of downtown Niagara Falls. Center the presentation on Old Falls Street and allow it to expand to Rainbow Boulevard and other nearby streets. Identify themes, stories, and subjects for interpretation. Identify locations where outdoor exhibits and artwork can most appropriately be installed in support of the existing streetscape design. Using these locations, lay out the most appropriate sequencing of stories and subjects. Conceptually design exhibits for each location. Identify a core presentation to be implemented in Phase 1, including estimated costs.
- Prepare **design guidelines for public art** to be created and installed as a part of the interpretive presentation. Include any design requirements necessary for artwork to be installed in public spaces.
- As an implementation project, publish a **“call for projects”** to artists for locations and themes to receive public art as outlined in the interpretive plan. Ask artists to submit ideas for the locations of interest to them, including costs. Make the submissions public and invite public comment. Have a review committee select projects to be implemented.

- Secure funding and prepare **construction documents** for the core presentation outlined as Phase 1 in the interpretive plan for *Tourism and Recreation*. Implement the Phase 1 project.
- Incorporate supporting interpretation into the implementation of **redevelopment projects** being undertaken within the Falls Precinct. Include both interpretive exhibits using the heritage area design standards and public art interpreting themes and stories as outlined in the interpretive plan.
- Incorporate interpretation, performances, and programming related to *Tourism and Recreation* into **events** conducted along Old Falls Street.
- Develop **audio tours** and **self guided walking tours** for downloading. Offer **guided walking tours** by the heritage area's Certified Guides for visitors with regularly scheduled times leaving from the heritage area's Interpretive Center.

2.5 Power and Industry

In the generation of electrical power and the resultant industrial development, Niagara Falls presents a major story of technology and its consequences. The story is rich with personalities, innovation, and high-stakes risk. It includes the first development and installation of large electrical generators, the first long distance transmission of electrical power, and the attraction of cutting edge industries that have shaped human experience in the twentieth century.

In highlighting the history of power generation, the theme *Power and Industry* presents a story of major technological advancements and the bi-national cooperation necessary to harness hydroelectric power at the Falls. The theme includes the industrial development that arose dependent upon Niagara power, pollution caused by industry, and today's efforts of environmental remediation.

Power and Industry is the story of the City of Niagara Falls. It is an opportunity to engage visitors and relate a story of deep significance to the nation, a story few visitors realize is here. This theme will be interpreted in four locations. The terminus of the Hydraulic Canal at the edge of the Niagara Gorge is the location where the groundbreaking Schoellkopf Power Station and Aluminum Company of America plant were constructed. Visitors will be intercepted here and introduced to the *Power and Industry* theme and stories. Over the longer term, a major new landscape interpretive presentation is proposed as a 'Power and Industry Plaza' in the re-envisioning of the city's proposed Cultural District in the same area.

The authentic industrial landscape along Buffalo Avenue will be interpreted using innovative large-scale exhibits. The story of Love Canal and the rise of the American environmental movement will be told in collaboration with the community of LaSalle. Power Vista will continue to tell the story of today's power industry.

ACTION: Interpret the heritage area theme *Power and Industry* through high quality exhibits, artwork, and programming in a manner that creates a world class visitor experience and enhances landscape and community character.

2.5.1 Theme Statements

Primary Theme:

Power and Industry

Niagara Falls was the place where the large-scale generation of electricity was first undertaken with tremendous implications for changes in the American way of life.

Secondary Themes:

The Age of Electricity

The ability to generate and transmit electricity on a large scale was made possible at Niagara Falls through invention, competition, and entrepreneurial brinksmanship undertaken on a world-wide scale. The personalities and events surrounding this landmark technological breakthrough were colorful and audacious. Its implications for human society are still being felt today, and its promising potential as a source to help meet future energy needs is increasingly understood and appreciated.

Better Things for Better Living...Through Chemistry

The availability of large amounts of inexpensive hydroelectric power attracted new industries to Niagara Falls in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. New industrial processes were developed using temperature levels never before possible, resulting in a technological revolution. The electrochemical industry was created out of nothing and had far reaching effects on the production of primary materials and the manufacturing of goods that used those materials.

Utopian Vision

The dream of unlimited power available at Niagara Falls created an exuberant optimism that seemed to be borne out in the cutting-edge technologies, new products, and rapid growth and prosperity of the city. Niagara Falls was becoming an industrial metropolis that spawned utopian visions of the future.

The People of Niagara Falls

The city's rapid growth and expanding workforce attracted many new residents to Niagara Falls representing all levels of society and a diverse range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. They brought with them their own cultural traditions and established local ethnic communities that flourished and that remain vibrant today.

Robert Moses and the Power Authority

By the mid-twentieth century, the electrical revolution nationwide had caught up with Niagara Falls. Through a bi-national agreement, a new vision for regional hydroelectric power generation was established and new power plants were constructed. In the City of Niagara Falls, large-scale changes to the city's urban fabric were undertaken led by Robert Moses amid great controversy. These changes did not halt the city's industrial decline, as industries began moving to other locations. Niagara Falls' position was no longer unique.

Birth of America's Environmental Movement

Niagara's industrial prosperity had unintended consequences. New technological and industrial processes led to the production of unusable byproducts and industrial waste on a massive scale. Workers were exposed to extreme health hazards through lack of knowledge and recognition of the need to take necessary precautions. Waste products were disposed of in an expedient manner dangerous to public health. The publicity created by local activists at Love Canal contributed to the birth of the environmental movement and a national response to address problems related to industrial hazards.

2.5.2 Interpretive Concepts, Locations, and Ideas

The following concepts provide a basis for interpretation of the theme *Power and Industry* within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. See **Figure 2-3**.

- Introduce the primary theme at the heritage area's proposed **Interpretive Center** and provide visitors with information on opportunities for exploration.
- Engage visitors at the **site of the former Hydraulic Canal, Schoellkopf Power Station, and Aluminum Company of America plant** along the Niagara Gorge.
- Using **landscape placemakers**, delineate the actual locations and extent of the Hydraulic Canal and ALCOA plant in the existing landscape to support interpretation.
- As a longer-term action, develop plans for an extensive, **world class landscape installation**, such as a Power and Industry Plaza, as part of the city's newly envisioned Cultural District, also in the vicinity of the gorge, interpreting the theme *Power and Industry*.

[Insert sidebar on ideas for landscape exhibits associated with a Power and Industry Plaza: large-scale interactive map; profile of industries; the people who came here; sound and light show, etc.]

- Coordinate with and support **Power Vista** in its programming and interpretation of today's power plant, contemporary electrical network, and power usage.
- Develop phased interpretation of the **Buffalo Avenue industrial corridor**. For the short term, develop a brochure, downloadable auto tour, and guided tours led by heritage area Certified Guides.
- Over the longer term, design and install **high quality billboard-scaled interpretive exhibits** of industrial character along Buffalo Avenue. Billboard-scaled exhibits are necessary to fit into the context of the industrial landscape and to be able to be appreciated from automobiles. Automobile pull-offs can be installed at each exhibit location where visitors may stop to see smaller, detailed interpretive exhibits. Exhibits on each major company could be installed. Include automobile pull-offs at each site with human-scaled exhibits, benches, and appropriate landscaping. Collaborate with remaining industries along Buffalo Avenue.

[Insert sidebar example of a billboard-scaled exhibit.]

- Provide interpretation of the planned community of **Echota** near Buffalo Avenue in collaboration with residents.
- Work with the LaSalle community to guide interpretation of the story of **Love Canal** and its role in the birth of the environmental movement as well as the community's other Power & Industry stories, such as the planned community in **Evershed**.
- Work to preserve and interpret the **Adams Transformer House**. Consider its possible long-term use as an interpretive hub for the *Power and Industry* theme once other interpretive steps have been undertaken and proven successful.

2.5.3 Primary Partners

The following heritage area partners are expected to play primary roles in the planning and implementation of interpretation of *Power and Industry*.

- **New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Western District, Niagara Region (New York State Parks)** – should collaborate in conveying the story of *Power and Industry* within Niagara Falls State Park.
- **Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and Staff** – should offer to collaborate with State Parks on methods and locations for communicating the *Power and Industry* theme within its parks, building on existing interpretive programming. Should provide leadership in planning and implementation of exhibits and programs outside of state parks.
- **New York Power Authority** – should continue its programming at Power Vista for visitors and students and collaborate with other partners in conceiving and implementing interpretation at other locations.
- **City of Niagara Falls** – should incorporate the idea of a world class landscape installation on *Power and Industry* into the vision and design of the Cultural District and work toward its realization. The city should also help lead implementation of initiatives along Buffalo Avenue and at Love Canal.
- **Community of LaSalle** – should determine how it wishes to interpret stories associated with Love Canal and its role in creating the environmental movement.
- **USA Niagara** – should assist the heritage area by managing the design and installation of exhibit projects. They should play a major role in coordinating and implementing the proposed world class landscape installation as part of the Cultural District.
- **Local Industries** – should participate in sponsoring, supporting, and hosting the design and installation of exhibits on Niagara's industrial history.

2.5.4 Implementation and Phasing

Short term steps for interpretation of the theme *Power and Industry* should be implemented as a **priority project** of the heritage area, including the installation of exhibits and placemakers, publishing of a brochure, and creation of a tour along Buffalo Avenue. Steps toward the development of exhibits along Buffalo Avenue and work with the community of LaSalle to interpret Love Canal will take longer, but should be moved forward.

The concept of a world class landscape installation will be a **longer term action**, should be worked into planning for the Cultural District, and will evolve as planning and implementation of the city's vision for the District takes shape.

The following steps should be undertaken for implementation.

1. Consult with New York State Parks on concepts for interpretation within the state parks.
2. Prepare supporting materials for interpretation including a **brochure, audio tour, and scripts and training for guided tours** by the heritage area's Certified Guides.

3. Collaborate with representatives of the community of LaSalle to determine how best to interpret the story of **Love Canal**. Prepare an **interpretive plan** for implementation, including costs. Secure funding and implement the plan.
4. Prepare an **interpretive plan** for high quality **billboard-scaled interpretive exhibits** of industries along Buffalo Avenue with automobile pull-offs, additional human-scale exhibits, and associated landscape improvements. Involve local industries in the planning and implementation.
5. Collaborate with the city, USA Niagara, and other partners in the **conceptual design** and steps toward implementation of the envisioned **Cultural District**, including a world class landscape installation interpreting *Power and Industry*.

2.6 Borderland/Border Crossing

Niagara's position as an international boundary has shaped its character in many ways. The region was a center of conflict, first between the colonial powers of France and Great Britain, then between the United States and its former colonial ruler. The area was an important passage to the Great Lakes and the interior of the continent and contains resources that express its character as both a barrier and gateway. The long-time and continuing presence of the Haudenosaunee in the Niagara Region places the "borderland" theme in interesting perspective, since their presence predated the European-imposed concept of "border" and their struggles involved complex economic, social, and political relationships in the attempt to retain possession of their homeland and way of life.

The boundary at Niagara remains consequential. The US-Canadian border is the longest undefended international border in the world. The 30-mile region from Buffalo to Youngstown represents the only opportunity for a bridge crossing between Canada and the United States in the 450-mile long border section that stretches from Detroit to The Thousand Islands. Three of the four local bridges are located within the boundaries of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.

Legal, social, political, and security issues related to the border touch all of the themes to be interpreted within the heritage area. The concept of a Niagara Region that includes the geographic area on both sides of the river is one that the heritage area embraces in its regional perspective and will seek to advance through engagement and partnerships.

The theme *Borderland/Border Crossing* encompasses the broad story of human interaction within the Niagara Region from pre-contact through the present. Within the heritage area, it will be interpreted in part through five storylines that highlight milestones in the course of events and can be used to convey the broader subjects of the movements, interests, conflicts, and accommodations of peoples within the region. Additional stories may be developed for this theme as appropriate.

Primary Theme Statement

The Niagara Frontier, from first contact to today, has played a critical role in the contest of nations (European, Native American and Colonial/American) for economic and political control of the river and its falls. As a key transportation nexus, the region has evolved as an international border with resulting impacts and consequences to its history and character.

2.7 Borderland: The Western Door

The storyline *The Western Door* interprets the history and culture of the Haudenosaunee people of Western New York and Southern Ontario as it relates to Niagara Falls and the Niagara River. It refers to the Seneca Nation's role as the "Keepers of the Western Door" of the longhouse. As the westernmost of

the Six Nations at the time of the formation of the Iroquois League, the Seneca monitored and protected this entrance to the Haudenosaunee world. Interpretation is undertaken in partnership with the Tuscarora and Seneca Nations and will help visitors understand and appreciate the Haudenosaunee world view and how their perspective translates into the lives of individuals and communities.

The Western Door will be interpreted in conjunction with the theme *Natural Phenomenon* in the necklace of state parks, local parks, and public spaces that border the Niagara River from LaSalle south to Old Fort Niagara. Interpretive presentations of the two themes will be intertwined as appropriate to reinforce each other and strengthen appreciation of the natural world. Interpretive hubs featuring specific aspects of the Haudenosaunee story are proposed within Earl W. Brydges Artpark State Park, and Old Fort Niagara in cooperation with New York State Parks. Interpretive programming will emphasize the role of the Haudenosaunee in shaping regional history, environmental education and restoration, and the relationship of man within the natural world.

ACTION: Interpret the heritage area storyline *The Western Door* through high quality exhibits, artwork, and programming in a manner that creates a world class visitor experience and enhances landscape and community character.

2.7.1 Theme Statements

Primary Theme:

The Western Door

Haudenosaunee means “People who are building an extended house” and refers to the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, the most powerful Native American influence east of the Mississippi. As the westernmost of the Six Nations, the Seneca were known as the “Keepers of the Western Door.”

Secondary Themes:

The Seneca

For over a thousand years the Seneca people have lived in what is now known as Western New York State. They have witnessed, experienced, and endured many changes over those centuries. Today, they are a proud Nation with a rich history and culture, and a promising future. Like their ancient ancestors, they treasure the beauty of their lands and the bounty of nature, but they have also built a strong, sovereign economy focused on improving the lives of their people.

The Tuscarora

People of the Tuscarora Nation migrated to eastern New York from North Carolina in the 18th century to join with the Haudenosaunee. Later in the eighteenth century, many Tuscarora moved again, to the Niagara region. Their story is an amazing tale of survival and is testimony to the adaptability of the Tuscarora culture. Today, the Tuscarora continue to operate under a traditional form of government with respect for civility and law, a tradition of sharing and giving back, and a sense of stewardship for the land.

The Niagara River

Long known as a portage between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, Niagara Falls and the Niagara River were significant to the Haudenosaunee. By the mid-18th century, the region was controlled by the Seneca, and the portage provided work for Seneca men. Oral tradition of the Haudenosaunee tells of spirits living beneath the Niagara Falls, called the Thunder Beings, saving a young woman from taking her own life, a story that was later romanticized into “the Maid of the Mist.” Evidence of fishing culture predating Seneca and Tuscarora arrival along the Niagara River can be found in many archeological sites. Permanent residency of the Tuscarora along the river revitalized the Haudenosaunee occupation of these ancient fishing sites.

The Ganonyok

The Haudenosaunee view the natural world and its bounty as a gift and their community as connected to a living earth and a spiritual universe. The Haudenosaunee people give thanks each day through the Ganonyok, a daily expression of gratitude that serves as a reminder to acknowledge and appreciate all things. The Ganonyok reinforces the connection that people have to the world around them.

2.7.2 Interpretive Concepts, Locations, and Ideas

The following concepts provide a basis for interpretation of the storyline *The Western Door* within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. See **Figure 2-4**.

- Introduce the primary theme at the heritage area's proposed **Interpretive Center** and provide visitors with information on opportunities for exploration.
- Interpret themes and stories related to *The Western Door* in the **necklace of state parks, local parks, and public spaces** that border the Niagara River from LaSalle south to Old Fort Niagara.
- In collaboration with partners, plan, design, and install a **comprehensive network of landscape exhibits** interpreting themes, stories, and subjects related to *The Western Door* along the river corridor's trail system. Intertwine interpretation with that of the theme *Natural Phenomenon*.
- Include the opportunity for **living history presentations** by the Seneca and Tuscarora peoples within the heritage area..
- Continue and enhance the 'customary use' of Tuscarora women **selling traditional beadwork in the vicinity of Niagara Falls and the rapids**.
- Feature the **Tuscarora Nation exhibit** at Power Vista in the overall interpretive presentation.
- Interpret the **lower river spearing docks** along the Niagara River.
- In association with the lower river spearing docks, present interpretation of the **Tuscarora Nation** and its culture today, including present relationships with the United States.
- Include interpretation of the Seneca in relation to the story of controlling the portage around the falls and **carrying European goods up the Escarpment**.
- Support continued involvement and interpretation of the 18th century Haudenosaunee story as it relates to the theme *Clash of Cultures* at **Old Fort Niagara** and other military history sites within the National Heritage Area.
- Publish a range of **interpretive materials** supporting interpretation in collaboration with partners.
- Coordinate and support **guided tours, living history programming, and events** in collaboration with partners.

2.7.3 Primary Partners

The following heritage area partners are expected to play primary roles in the planning and implementation of interpretation related to *The Western Door*.

- **Tuscarora Nation** – should provide leadership in developing the themes, stories, and interpretive content and should collaborate in its implementation.
- **Seneca Nation** – should provide leadership in developing the themes, stories, and interpretive content and should collaborate in its implementation.
- **Tonawanda Seneca Nation** – should be included in planning for interpretation should they so desire.
- **New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Western District, Niagara Region (New York State Parks) – New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Western District, Niagara Region (New York State Parks)** – manages the state parks along the Niagara River.
- **Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and Staff** – should provide support in the form of funding and technical services for the development of this theme in close collaboration with the Tuscarora Nation, Seneca Nation, and New York State Parks within state parks and should provide leadership in planning and implementation outside of state parks.
- **Old Fort Niagara Association** – currently offers a wide range of interpretive programming involving stories of Seneca and Tuscarora involvement in historical events. Interpretation includes presentations by authentic living history interpreters.
- **Artpark & Company, Inc.** – manages programs and facilities at Artpark and should be involved in the conception, design, and installation of any interpretation installed in the park.
- **Power Vista** – manages the exhibit on the Tuscarora Nation at Power Vista.
- **Ganondagan State Historic Site** – coordinating statewide interpretation of the Seneca Nation.

2.7.4 Implementation and Phasing

Implementation of the storyline *The Western Door* should be undertaken as a **priority project** in conjunction with phased interpretation of the theme *Natural Phenomenon*. The implementation of appropriate high quality, world class landscape exhibits along the trails system will be a significant component of the heritage interpretive presentation.

The following steps should be undertaken for implementation.

1. Collaborate with representatives of the Tuscarora, Seneca, and Tonawanda Seneca Nations on **conceptualizing** proposed interpretation, messaging, and media. Provide an opportunity for other nations of the Handenosaunee to review and comment as appropriate.
2. Consult with New York State Parks and Artpark & Company, Inc. on concepts for interpretation with state parks relating to this theme.
3. Include theme *The Western Door* in the preparation of a **comprehensive interpretive plan** as discussed above with respect to the theme *Natural Phenomenon*.
4. Prepare an **interpretive plan** for exhibits on the spearing docks and Tuscarora culture.

5. Identify and secure **funding** and obtain necessary **approvals** for implementation as appropriate to partner and National Heritage Area roles.
6. Continue to develop and enhance **interpretive programming** in conjunction with the Tuscarora Nation, Seneca Nation, Tonawanda Seneca Nation, Old Fort Niagara, Artpark, and State Parks.

2.8 Borderland: Clash of Empires

The storyline *Clash of Empires* interprets Niagara's role in the mid-18th century global conflict between France and Great Britain known worldwide as the Seven Years War and in the United States as the French and Indian War. The portage at Niagara Falls was of international strategic significance as the gateway to the interior of the North American continent by way of the Great Lakes, and the British siege of Fort Niagara was a critical turning point in the war as it played out in North America.

Clash of Empires is among the most exciting and dramatic themes being interpreted within the Niagara region, second only to the Falls itself. Old Fort Niagara is an impressive historic site, and the interpretive programs conducted there by the Old Fort Niagara Association are excellent and appreciated by visitors of all ages. The objective of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is to increase visitation to Old Fort Niagara by supporting its programming and to spread its storytelling throughout the Lower Niagara River.

Interpretation of this theme will therefore be centered at Old Fort Niagara. Exhibits and programming will also be offered at other locations of significance to the story, including Youngstown, where the critical battle of La Belle-Famille occurred, as well as both ends of the portage, the lower river landing within Artpark State Park and the site of Little Fort Niagara on the upper river. The theme also proposes interpretation of LaSalle's 1669 and 1679 expeditions at Griffon Park in the community of LaSalle on the upper river, the fur trade before 1759, and the post-war Battle of Devil's Hole of 1763.

ACTION: Interpret the heritage area storyline *Clash of Empires* through high quality exhibits, artwork, and programming in a manner that creates a world class visitor experience and enhances landscape and community character.

2.8.1 Theme Statements

Primary Theme:

Clash of Empires

The Niagara River was of international strategic significance as the gateway to the interior of the North American continent by way of Great Lakes. This route gave French forces access from the St. Lawrence River Valley to the Ohio, Illinois, and Mississippi River Valleys. If they could control it, British settlement could be contained to the thin line of colonies along the east coast.

Secondary Themes:

Niagara Portage

Access to the interior of the continent by way of the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, Niagara River, and Great Lakes required portage around the Falls. The economic and strategic significance of the portage was well known to the Haudenosaunee, early European explorers, military forces, and frontier settlers. After the attack at Devil's Hole in 1763, Seneca attempts to control this route as part of their role as 'Keepers of the Western Door' became less successful and British influence gained power.

Siege of Fort Niagara

The nineteen-day siege of Fort Niagara by British forces in 1759 was the climax of a century-long struggle for the northern gateway to the interior of the North American continent. Conduct of the siege

followed the classic techniques of then-modern warfare applied to the wilds of the remote American frontier. The bloody repulse of French troops sent to raise the siege at La Famille and subsequent capitulation of the fort ended all hopes of French ambitions within the Great Lakes.

Impact on the Haudenosaunee

The long standing Haudenosaunee strategy of playing European nations against each other lacked leverage with the French loss of Fort Niagara and North America.

2.8.2 Interpretive Concepts, Locations, and Ideas

The following concepts provide a basis for interpretation of the storyline *Clash of Empires* within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. See **Figure 2-5**.

- Introduce the primary theme at the heritage area's proposed **Interpretive Center** and provide visitors with information on opportunities for exploration.
- Support, enhance, and market the broad range of interpretive programming offered at **Old Fort Niagara** by the Old Fort Niagara Association and its partners as the core of interpretation related to the theme *Clash of Empires*.
- To the extent possible on public lands, use **landscape placemakers** to delineate the approximate location and layout of British siege works east of Fort Niagara. If not possible, clearly convey the scale and distances involved in interpretation at the fort.
- Implement a major landscape interpretive exhibit on the **Battle of Belle-Famille** within Falkner Park or at another appropriate location in Youngstown. Coordinate interpretation with Old Fort Niagara and link the sites with interpretation along the Greenway trail system.
- Consider various alternatives for interpretation of the **portage around Niagara Falls** at Earl W. Brydges Artpark State Park and up the escarpment. Coordinate the exhibit with interpretation of the Seneca and Tuscarora Nations and lower river spearing docks as outlined for the theme *The Western Door*.
- Implement a major landscape interpretive exhibit near the site of **Little Fort Niagara** in Porter Park along Buffalo Avenue in the City of Niagara Falls. Highlight the existing chimney ruin. Feature interpretation of the fort and use of the upper landing over time.
- Implement a major landscape interpretive exhibit on **LaSalle's 1679 expedition** in Griffon Park in the community of LaSalle. The exhibit could include a replica of the *Griffon* under construction if enough is known about the appearance of the ship.
- Consider various alternatives for the interpretation of the **Battle of Devil's Hole** in conjunction with interpretation of the portage route at suitable sites.
- Consider various alternatives for the interpretation of the **British landing and encampment** during the siege of Fort Niagara at Four Mile Creek.
- Publish a range of **interpretive materials** supporting interpretation in collaboration with partners.
- Coordinate and support **guided tours, living history programming, and events** in collaboration with partners.

2.8.3 Primary Partners

The following heritage area partners are expected to play primary roles in the planning and implementation of interpretation of *Clash of Empires*.

- **Old Fort Niagara Association** – currently offers a wide range of interpretive programming at Old Fort Niagara and should play a leadership role in interpretation of this theme both at the fort and collaboratively at other sites.
- **New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Western District, Niagara Region (New York State Parks)** – **New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Western District, Niagara Region (New York State Parks)** – manages the state parks along the Niagara River
- **Artpark & Company, Inc.** – manages programs and facilities at Artpark and must be involved in the conception, design, and installation of any interpretation installed in the park.
- **Tuscarora Nation** – should collaborate developing interpretation on the Haudenosaunee role relative to the themes at multiple sites, in particular Old Fort Niagara, the lower landing, and Devil's Hole.
- **Seneca Nation** – should collaborate developing interpretation on the Haudenosaunee role relative to the themes at multiple sites, in particular Old Fort Niagara, the lower landing, and Devil's Hole.
- **Village of Youngstown** – should lead the development of interpretation on the Battle of Belle-Famille.
- **City of Niagara Falls** – should play a leadership role in interpretation of Little Fort Niagara and the upper landing in Porter Park and LaSalle's 1679 expedition in Griffon Park.
- **Community of LaSalle** – should play a leadership role in the interpretation of LaSalle's 1679 expedition in Griffon Park.
- **New York Power Authority** – manages land associated with the portage route and the Battle of Devil's Hole, and must be involved in the conception, design, and installation of any interpretation installed within their boundaries.
- **Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and Staff** – should provide leadership in planning and implementation in close collaboration with partners. The NFNHA should lead preparation of detailed interpretation plans, organize funding, and coordinate phased implementation.

2.8.4 Implementation and Phasing

Interpretation of the storyline *Clash of Empires* is a **priority project** of the heritage area because of the level and quality of existing programming currently being offered at Old Fort Niagara. Interpretation is already happening, and increased promotion can be offered to visitors through the heritage area as an early action. Support and enhancement of the programming at Old Fort Niagara should be undertaken through the Old Fort Niagara Association.

The primary focus of this storyline is the landscape along the Lower Niagara River from Old Fort Niagara to Devil's Hole State Park. Coordinated interpretation should be expanded through the landscape upriver from the fort. Projects should be implemented in a phased manner beginning with interpretation of the Battle of Belle-Famille in Youngstown and of the portage and lower landing in Artpark and along the escarpment. Interpretation at other relevant and appropriate sites may be implemented over time.

The following steps should be taken for implementation.

1. Consult with partners on **process and roles**. Confirm the process necessary for close collaboration with New York State Parks.
2. Collaborate with Old Fort Niagara Association and other partners on possible **short-term enhancements** to existing programming at Old Fort Niagara.
3. Prepare an **interpretive plan** in **Youngstown** on the Battle of Belle-Famille and at **other locations** on portage route, including costs.
4. Identify and secure **funding** and obtain necessary **approvals** for implementation of interpretive exhibits in Youngstown and other locations.
5. Prepare **interpretive plans** for high quality landscape exhibits for **other sites** related to *Clash of Empires*. Undertake phased implementation as projects and funding allow.
6. Continue to develop and enhance interpretive programming between sites and partners. Extend programming the full length of the lower river and up the escarpment.

2.9 Borderland: Revolutionary Frontier

The storyline *Revolutionary Frontier* interprets the role of the Niagara River region in the American Revolution. As a British base of activities, Niagara's story is related to the conduct of the war throughout frontier New York. It was particularly significant for the Haudenosaunee, who were largely driven from their lands in the eastern and central parts of New York due to their siding with the British. The Haudenosaunee played a key role in fighting along the frontier.

Interpretation of the Revolutionary Era within the heritage area will be centered at Old Fort Niagara, which already addresses the story. It may be shared with Lewiston and Youngstown as a subject for interpretation along the entire Lower Niagara River.

ACTION: Interpret the heritage area storyline *Revolutionary Frontier* through high quality exhibits, artwork, and programming in a manner that creates a world class visitor experience and enhances landscape and community character.

2.9.1 Theme Statements

Primary Theme:

Revolutionary Frontier

During the American Revolution, the British base at Fort Niagara served as a safe haven for those loyal to the British, whether European settlers or Haudenosaunee villagers, and a base for offensive operations against colonial settlements on the frontier.

Secondary Themes:

Neighbor against Neighbor

Combined colonial and Native American forces organized at Fort Niagara conducted raids against colonial settlements in the Mohawk Valley and northeastern Pennsylvania, their former neighbors, in an escalating cycle of violence and atrocities.

Division of the Six Nations

Active participation by most Haudenosaunee tribes on the British side and some on the American side through raids on the frontier led to the targeting of their villages in central New York by American forces. As a result of the war, the Six Nations were divided, with some moving to Ontario and others staying in New York; the Tuscarora fought on both sides of the Revolutionary War. Post-war treaties shrank Haudenosaunee lands to a few scattered reservations, opening Western New York for settlement by Europeans.

2.9.2 Interpretive Concepts, Locations, and Ideas

The following concepts provide a basis for interpretation of the storyline *Revolutionary Frontier* within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. See **Figure 2-6**.

- Support, enhance, and market interpretation related to the American Revolution offered at **Old Fort Niagara** by the Old Fort Niagara Association and its partners.
- **Coordinate with other sites** interpreting the American Revolution in New York such as Fort Stanwix National Monument, Saratoga National Historical Park, Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site, Newtown Battlefield State Park, and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.
- Publish **interpretive materials** supporting interpretation in collaboration with partners.
- Coordinate and support **living history programming, and events** in collaboration with Old Fort Niagara, Lewiston, Youngstown, and other partners along the Lower Niagara River.

2.9.3 Primary Partners

The following heritage area partners are expected to play primary roles in the planning and implementation of interpretation of *Revolutionary Frontier*.

- **Old Fort Niagara Association** – currently offers interpretive programming on the American Revolution at Old Fort Niagara and should play a leadership role in interpretation of this theme both at the fort and collaboratively at other sites.
- **Tuscarora Nation** – should collaborate developing interpretation on the Haudenosaunee role and experience during the Revolution.
- **Seneca Nation** – should collaborate developing interpretation on the Haudenosaunee role and experience during the Revolution.
- **Parks Canada** – should be asked to join in cooperative programming for both sides of the Niagara River.
- **Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and Staff** – should support and help coordinate interpretation of this theme by partners.

2.9.4 Implementation and Phasing

Interpretation of the storyline *Revolutionary Frontier* should be undertaken by partners with support from the heritage area. Steps toward implementation should include the following.

1. Heritage area partners should meet to **review the extent** to which the theme *Revolutionary Frontier* should be interpreted beyond Old Fort Niagara and stories that could be told.
2. **Consult with entities** interpreting the American Revolution in New York to see how the heritage area can best coordinate.
3. **Prepare a plan** that outlines how interpretation will be undertaken and the roles of participating partners.

2.10 Borderland: War of 1812

The storyline *War of 1812* builds upon existing initiatives currently being undertaken to celebrate the bicentennial of the War of 1812. The Niagara 1812 Legacy Council, a bi-national collaboration led by organizations in Canada, will be featuring a wide range of events at historic sites along the Niagara River over the next two years. On the US side of the river, the War of 1812 is currently interpreted at Old Fort Niagara and events associated with the war are held in Lewiston. Because of the border with Canada, the War of 1812 was a significant event in the region, with military action dramatically affecting the lives of local residents and further dividing the Haudenosaunee and limiting their movement across the Niagara River. The bicentennial celebrations should be used as a means of strengthening and enhancing interpretation of the War of 1812 story as a permanent interpretive presentation on the US side of the river.

This storyline will be interpreted primarily along the Lower Niagara River with Old Fort Niagara playing the lead role. Interpretation may also be presented in the City of Niagara Falls with respect to Fort Schlosser, the Porters, and other possible subjects. *War of 1812* is an opportunity to build a stronger collaboration with organizations and sites on the Canadian side of the Niagara River. The heritage area should lead the collaboration with Canadian organizations.

ACTION: Interpret the heritage area storyline *War of 1812* through high quality exhibits, artwork, and programming in a manner that creates a world class visitor experience and enhances landscape and community character.

2.10.1 Theme Statements

Primary Theme:
War of 1812

As a boundary between the United States and British-held Canada, the Niagara River was a scene of conflict in which residents became deeply engaged. At least five major battles occurred near the river's 35-mile length, but the border returned to its pre-war status. Villages on both sides were burned. The British occupied Fort Niagara and neutralized the countryside south to Buffalo.

2.10.2 Interpretive Concepts, Locations, and Ideas

The following concepts provide a basis for interpretation of the storyline *War of 1812* within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. See **Figure 2-7**.

- Introduce the primary theme at the heritage area's proposed **Interpretive Center** and provide visitors with information on opportunities for exploration.
- Actively engage with the **Niagara 1812 Legacy Council** in coordinating and strengthening the relationship between US and Canadian interpretive initiatives.
- Support, enhance, and market interpretation related to the War of 1812 offered at **Old Fort Niagara** by the Old Fort Niagara Association and its partners.
- Work with the communities of **Youngstown and Lewiston** on interpretive exhibits, programming, and events.
- Consider installing exhibits interpreting Fort Schlosser, the Porters, and other subjects at **Porter Park** in Niagara Falls.
- Publish **interpretive materials** supporting interpretation in collaboration with partners.

2.10.3 Primary Partners

The following heritage area partners are expected to play primary roles in the planning and implementation of interpretation of *War of 1812*.

- **Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and Staff** – should provide leadership in collaborating with the Legacy Council and organizations in Canada on a bi-national approach to interpretation of the theme and its stories.
- **Old Fort Niagara Association** – currently offers interpretive programming on the War of 1812 at Old Fort Niagara and should play a leadership role in interpretation of this theme at the Fort, along the Lower Niagara River (including Youngstown and Lewiston), and in collaboration with Canadian sites.
- **Niagara 1812 Legacy Council** – coordinating interpretation on the Canadian and US sides of the border.
- **Village of Lewiston** – organizations in the village that undertake interpretation and events such as the Lewiston Council on the Arts and Historical Association of Lewiston should collaborate with other heritage area partners interpreting the theme.
- **Village of Youngstown** – should participate in interpretive events and consider the installation of exhibits.
- **City of Niagara Falls** – should lead projects interpreting Fort Schlosser and other stories associated with the upper river and Falls.

2.10.4 Implementation and Phasing

Interpretation of the storyline *War of 1812* is important as a means of strengthening collaboration between sites in the US and Canada and providing a unified interpretive presentation. Steps toward implementation should include the following.

1. **Consult** with the Niagara 1812 Legacy Council on plans for interpretation during the bicentennial and beyond. Explore ways that joint programming can be undertaken between sites on both sides of the river.
2. **Prepare a plan** that outlines how *War of 1812* may be interpreted through historic sites, landscape exhibits, and events along the Lower Niagara River and at Porter Park in the City of Niagara Falls. Delineate the roles of various partners.
3. **Begin implementing** the plan as an ongoing, yearly endeavor including bi-national projects.

2.11 Borderland: Underground Railroad

The storyline *Underground Railroad* interprets the role of Niagara Falls and the Niagara region as a crossing point for African Americans fleeing to Canada to escape slavery. Interpretation will feature collaboration between the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area (State Heritage Area), the City of Niagara Falls' North Star Initiative, and the villages of Lewiston and Youngstown.

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area is a New York State Heritage Area created to study, preserve, and interpret sites related to the Underground Railroad in the Niagara Falls region. The State Heritage Area has undertaken research and prepared a management plan that identifies historic sites and outlines a program of interpretation of the city's Underground Railroad stories. Closely associated with the State Heritage Area is the city's North Star Initiative, which is implementing interpretive exhibits at the historic Customhouse on Whirlpool Street at the site of Suspension Bridge, a crossing point for many freedom-seekers.

The work of the National Heritage Area, State Heritage Area, and North Star Initiative have been coordinated into a single interpretive presentation. The State Heritage Area will provide leadership in implementing interpretation within the City of Niagara Falls, while the National Heritage Area will coordinate interpretation by partners outside of the city. Presentation concepts and programming will be fully integrated between sites and will emphasize artwork, sculpture, and landscape enhancements featuring interpretive messaging. The National Heritage Area reserves the right to evaluate and certify the authenticity and quality of any interpretive efforts it might support.

ACTION: Interpret the heritage area storyline *Underground Railroad* through high quality exhibits, artwork, and programming in a manner that creates a world class visitor experience and enhances landscape and community character.

2.11.1 Theme Statements

Interpretive themes for the storyline *Underground Railroad* are being developed in collaboration with the State Heritage Area. The historical research and community outreach for the State Heritage Area included the definition of significant interpretive themes that speak to and provide connection between the various sites, stories, people, and topics associated with the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls. Suggested themes that could be used to illustrate significant connections and provide for consistent interpretation at diverse sites and various programming endeavors are outlined below.

Primary Theme:

Crossing the Niagara Gorge

The Niagara River and Gorge was an important crossing point into Canada for fugitives following the Underground Railroad. For the fugitive freedom seekers who passed through the Niagara Frontier, the

physical act of crossing the Niagara River represented the final act of courage and determination at the end of a long, arduous journey.

Secondary Themes:

Power, Struggle, and Freedom

The Niagara Frontier was contested ground in the struggle between established economic and political interests that supported the institution of American slavery, and the enslaved people, fugitives, freedom seekers, and abolitionists who opposed that institution. The Underground Railroad serves as an inspirational moral tale about the brilliant, organized, deliberate, and peaceful resistance to power that allowed the unlikely alliance of the enslaved and free opponents of slavery to undermine and eventually overturn the powerful, embedded institution of American slavery.

Destination: Niagara Falls

The Niagara Frontier was the ultimate destination for many fugitive enslaved peoples and represented the end of their perilous journey to freedom. Many of those individuals remained in, or returned to, Niagara Falls and helped to shape the physical, economic, and social landscape of the City.

The Past is Always Present

Niagara Falls' past includes the fierce struggle between freedom and slavery in the mid-nineteenth century, the resolve of fugitives to gain their freedom, and the proud dignity of the settlers and residents who helped to shape the present form and character of the City. That past has relevance to the contemporary experience of Niagara Falls, including its physical imprint on the urban landscape and the community's collective memory.

2.11.2 Interpretive Concepts, Locations, and Ideas

The following concepts provide a basis for interpretation of the storyline *Underground Railroad* within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. See **Figure 2-8**.

- Introduce the primary theme at the heritage area's proposed **Interpretive Center** and provide visitors with information on opportunities for exploration.
- Feature the **Customhouse** as a primary **interpretive hub** presenting the Underground Railroad story in Niagara Falls through its interior exhibits.
- Install **outdoor exhibits in the vicinity of the Customhouse**, including on the Customhouse property, at the state park overlook into the Niagara Gorge at the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge, and at sites along Upper Main Street.
- Work with federal authorities on the possible use of the abandoned **Whirlpool Rapids Railroad Bridge** as a gorge overlook which can be accessed by visitors.
- Install exhibits in downtown Niagara Falls in the **vicinity of Old Falls Street** interpreting the Cataract House, International Hotel, ferry crossing, and other sites and their roles in the Underground Railroad story.
- Implement an interpretive program in the **Village of Lewiston** featuring historic sites and stories along the Lower Niagara River associated with the Underground Railroad.

- Coordinate interpretation and programming related to the Underground Railroad theme at **sites in Niagara and Erie Counties** such as Murphy Orchards (a certified NPS 'Network to Freedom' site).
- Publish **interpretive materials** supporting interpretation in collaboration with partners.
- Coordinate and support **guided tours, living history programming, and events** in collaboration with partners.
- Assist sites with '**Network to Freedom**' **applications** to the National Park Service.

2.11.3 Primary Partners

The following heritage area partners are expected to play primary roles in the planning and implementation of interpretation of *Underground Railroad*.

- **Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area (State Heritage Area)** – should play the lead role in planning and implementing interpretation in the City of Niagara Falls in collaboration with partners.
- **City of Niagara Falls** – should work closely with the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area in planning and implementing interpretation.
- **Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and Staff** – should assist in coordinating *Underground Railroad* interpretation with other interpretation being undertaken within the National Heritage Area and should assist in coordinating implementation of *Underground Railroad* interpretation outside of the boundaries of the state heritage area.
- **Villages of Lewiston and Youngstown** – should undertake an interpretive presentation of *Underground Railroad* sites and stories within their community and along the lower river coordinating with the State Heritage Area.
- **National Park Service's Network to Freedom Program** – should be asked to participate in recognizing Underground Railroad sites and interpretive programming.

2.11.4 Implementation and Phasing

Interpretation of the storyline *Underground Railroad* should be undertaken as a **priority project** under the leadership of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area. Within the vicinity of the Customhouse, interpretation of the *Underground Railroad* should be the primary interpretive theme presented. Within the vicinity of downtown Niagara Falls and Old Falls Street, interpretation should be closely coordinated with exhibits and public art interpreting the theme *Tourism and Recreation*. The state heritage area's graphics and exhibit formats for the *Underground Railroad* should be closely coordinated with those of the national heritage area.

1. Upon completion of the interpretive plan for the **Customhouse and surrounding sites**, the City of Niagara Falls and Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area should implement proposed interpretive exhibits.
2. In coordination with preparation of an interpretive plan for the theme *Tourism and Recreation*, prepare a **plan for interpretive exhibits** on the *Underground Railroad* in **downtown Niagara Falls** and the **vicinity of Old Falls Street**.

3. Secure funding, prepare construction documents, and **implement** *Underground Railroad* exhibits in downtown Niagara Falls and the vicinity of Old Falls Street.
4. Incorporate interpretation, performances, and programming related to *Underground Railroad* into **events** conducted along Old Falls Street.
5. Work with the **Village of Lewiston** on a comprehensive plan for interpreting sites and stories associated with *Underground Railroad* including exhibits, performance art, guided tours, and events. Coordinate the plan with interpretation, tours, and events offered within the state heritage area.
6. Develop **audio tours** for downloading and **guided tours** by the heritage area's Certified Guides for visitors.
7. Coordinate interpretation at **partnering sites** in Niagara and Erie Counties as outlined in the following section of this chapter.

2.12 Regional Collaboration

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area offers a way to support regional collaboration in the areas of interpretation, heritage tourism, environmental conservation, and historic preservation. For the past decade, a number of regional partners on both the Canadian and US sides of the Niagara River have been thinking about ways in which regional collaboration can be strengthened and serve as a means for enhancing community character, the environment, and economic well-being.

The first step has been to find ways in which to reinforce public awareness of Niagara's regional identity; to encourage individuals and communities to think about the region as a recognizable entity in which all play a part. The second step has been to create decision-making structures that cross political boundaries in conceiving of and addressing issues of regional concern. The third step has been to actually undertake projects and initiatives that put that regional consciousness in play to achieve tangible results.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area plays a role in all three steps. Through interpretation, the heritage area helps strengthen regional identity by telling stories that link places together and communicates the regional identity to visitors and residents. As a decision-making entity that crosses political boundaries and includes many partners, the heritage area conceives of its mission in regional terms and its actions as the collaborative effort of its many partners working within their own realms of activity. Through the projects that the heritage area supports and undertakes, it will implement the regional vision to achieve tangible results.

The heritage area has three zones of activity:

1. The heritage area's enabling legislation identifies a bounded area that is the core of the national heritage area, including the City of Niagara Falls and a narrow area of land that stretches north along the Niagara River to Lake Ontario. Within this boundary, the heritage area will have a **direct, hands-on approach** to initiative and action as a collaboration of active partners.
2. Within Niagara and Erie Counties, the enabling legislation directs that the heritage area work with organizations, communities, and sites to which it is related by its interpretive themes, described earlier in this chapter. In this realm, the heritage area will be an **active coordinator**,

serving as a venue through which interested communities and sites can work together to tell the regional stories and encourage heritage tourism.

3. Within and beyond Niagara and Erie Counties, the heritage area will **collaborate with other regional, national, and bi-national organizations** and initiatives to promote regional identity and address regional issues of common concern. Regional issues in which the heritage area can play a strong role include:
 - economic well-being through cultural and heritage tourism,
 - community revitalization through historic preservation, and
 - environmental conservation through support of regional initiatives.

This chapter outlines how the heritage area can use interpretation as a means through which to strengthen regional identity and organize a regional presentation for heritage tourism. It will do so by collaborating with other regional, national, and bi-national organizations and initiatives and serving as a venue through which thematically related communities and sites can be interpretively linked.

2.12.1 Regional, National, and Bi-national Collaboration

Regional, national, and bi-national organizations and initiatives provide a means through which local communities and sites can be interpretively linked, telling regional stories that reinforce regional identity for residents and visitors. The following organizations and initiatives are the heritage area's primary partners for interpretation of the Niagara Region.

Niagara Parks Commission, Canada

The Niagara Parks Commission (Niagara Parks) is New York State Park's sister organization on the Canadian side of the Niagara River. As an independent and self-financed agency of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Niagara Parks has great flexibility and focus upon creating an attractive visitor experience through its presentation of the Falls, riverside park land, two-lane parkway, and multiple attractions. Niagara Parks links a series of historic interpretive sites extending from Old Fort Erie at the mouth of the Niagara River opposite Buffalo to Fort George and other sites at Niagara-on-the-Lake opposite Fort Niagara. Fort George and Queenston Heights are National Historic Sites operated by Parks Canada.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area and its partnering communities and sites should work with Niagara Parks and Parks Canada to identify thematic relationships for coordinating interpretation and events. Clear relationships exist for each of the themes presented earlier in this chapter. As the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area undertakes planning for its interpretive themes, it should review how each theme is addressed on the Canadian side and look for ways that interpretive relationships can be drawn. This can be done most simply by making sure that themes are presented in their **regional context**, presenting their full regional significance and describing related historical events on both sides of the river. Canadian sites, communities, and landscapes should be included in these contexts along with those on the US side as part of a holistic presentation of the Niagara Region.

Individually, interpretive sites along the US side should note and **draw interpretive connections** to thematically related sites on the Canadian side. This can be done through exhibits and programming. While themes such as *Natural Phenomenon*, *Power and Industry*, and *Tourism and Recreation* have obvious interpretive relationships that can be drawn on both sides of the river, perhaps the strongest interpretive connections can be forged through the themes *War of 1812* and *Underground Railroad*.

In its 1812 bicentennial celebration, the Niagara 1812 Legacy Council features sites and stories on both sides of the border. However, programming is being led and supported more strongly by Canadian organizations than it is by those in the US. As an early action, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area

should do what it can to support the bicentennial celebration by coordinating with the Legacy Council and helping to organize and support the initiatives of US partners. The heritage area should use the bicentennial celebration as a means of creating cross-border interpretive relationships as part of its implementation of *War of 1812* interpretation.

Similarly, strong interpretive relationships exist around the theme *Underground Railroad*, Canada being the destination and goal of fugitives seeking freedom. Under the leadership of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area, the national heritage area should help forge interpretive connections that relate the stories of fugitives reaching and crossing the border with stories of their lives once they arrived in Canada. As mentioned above, this can be achieved by presenting the regional context that links these stories and by establishing interpretive connections between exhibits and programming at sites on both sides of the river.

ACTION: Promote the concept of a Niagara Region that includes both the US and Canadian sides of the Niagara River by presenting a regional interpretive context and by drawing interpretive connections between thematically related sites on both sides of the river.

Niagara River Greenway

The 2007 Niagara River Greenway Plan outlines a vision for environmental stewardship, trail systems, public access, and interpretation of the Niagara River corridor from Buffalo to Old Fort Niagara. The Greenway includes the entire boundary of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. This heritage area management plan has been created in full coordination with the Greenway Plan, adopting its stewardship vision and developing its interpretive concepts in additional detail as described in this chapter. Many if not most of the implementation actions undertaken by the heritage area partners will be toward implementation of the Greenway vision.

Interpretively, the Greenway Plan delineates five overarching interpretive themes and identifies sites where those themes are or can be interpreted. The five themes include:

- The Landscape – celebrating natural diversity, habitats, and the region's park systems;
- The Bounty of Nature – promoting local agriculture through the region's orchards, farms and farm markets with their locally grown fruits, vegetables, wines, flowers, and handicrafts;
- Enterprise in The Arts – featuring regional arts and culture including the visual arts, performing arts, and architectural treasures;
- Stories of War, Peace and Freedom – presenting interpretation of the region's multifaceted history; and
- The Wealth of a Region – highlighting the growth of power, commerce, and industry within the region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area builds directly upon these themes and outlines how they will be interpreted in this chapter of the heritage area management plan. The heritage area themes presented here are detailed refinements of the broader Greenway themes as they are applied specifically to the heritage area landscape within the Greenway extending from the City of Niagara Falls north to Old Fort Niagara. The heritage area's interpretive plan is closely associated with the trail system described in the Greenway plan. The trail system is being implemented by partners consistent with both the Greenway and heritage area management plans. Implementation of the heritage area interpretive plan presented in this chapter will implement the Greenway Plan's interpretive vision.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area will work to support the Greenway vision in all of its areas of activity. The heritage area will work closely with partners to identify which projects most directly support the Greenway vision and should therefore be prioritized for implementation.

ACTION: Coordinate with and support the Niagara River Greenway by working with partners to implement its trail system and interpretive vision within the boundaries of the National Heritage Area.

ACTION: Actively support and promote top-priority projects that implement the vision and program outlined in the Niagara River Greenway Plan.

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor was established by Congress in 2000 and is the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area's sister heritage area in Western New York. Extending 524 miles across upstate New York from Whitehall to Buffalo, the heritage corridor follows the historic route of the Erie Canal and its tributaries, interpreting the region's history, culture, and environment.

As noted in its guidebook, the Western Erie Region features the longest section of the canal that still follows its original path and retains its historic relationship to the communities and landscapes along its banks. Lockport and Tonawanda/North Tonawanda are primary communities along the heritage corridor that feature historic sites and interpretation.

As national heritage areas, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area and Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor should work together to communicate the heritage area concept to residents of Niagara and Erie Counties and work with state and national heritage areas state-wide on issues of common concern.

Interpretively, the two national heritage areas should coordinate at the management level to relate their heritage area-wide interpretive presentations. They should coordinate at the local level by encouraging and supporting local sites in coordinating interpretation around themes of common interest.

ACTION: Work with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor on communicating the heritage area concept to residents of Niagara and Erie Counties. Work with other state and national heritage areas state-wide on issues of common concern.

ACTION: Coordinate Niagara Falls and Erie Canalway heritage area-wide interpretive presentations and local interpretive presentations around themes of common interest.

Seaway Trail

The Great Lakes Seaway Trail is a scenic byway and touring route that stretches 518 miles along the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, Niagara River, and Lake Erie from Massena, New York through Erie, Pennsylvania to the Ohio state line. Designated as one of 'America's Byways,' New York's portion of the byway is coordinated and managed by Seaway Trail, Inc. based in Sackets Harbor. Seaway Trail, Inc. coordinates partners, advocates for and promotes the byway, and undertakes byway planning, interpretation, and marketing projects.

The Niagara Region is a featured destination along the Seaway Trail, and includes both the City of Niagara Falls and the Lower Niagara River. Implementation of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area will create a stronger destination and visitor experience for travelers along the Seaway Trail and will support byway goals related to stewardship, interpretation, tourism, and transportation.

Within the national heritage area the Seaway Trail follows Route 18F (Lake Road, Main Street, and River Road) from Lake Ontario south through Youngstown and Lewiston to Route 104 (Lewiston Road and Main Street) through Niagara Falls. In downtown Niagara Falls, the byway follows Rainbow Boulevard to the John B. Daley Boulevard, where it joins the Robert Moses Parkway west to Route 384 (Buffalo

Avenue) at the Route 190 bridge. The Seaway Trail then follows Route 384 (Buffalo Avenue and River Road) through LaSalle south to Tonawanda.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should actively coordinate its activities with Seaway Trail, Inc. In collaboration with heritage area partners, Seaway Trail should begin promoting the heritage area as a single destination rather than as separate Niagara Falls and Lower Niagara River areas. In part, this will require collaboration between the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation and Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce in terms of advertising, promotion, and presentation within the Seaway Trail.

ACTION: Support goals, policies, and programs of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail through implementation of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area management plan.

ACTION: Present the unified national heritage area as a single destination and visitor experience along the Great Lakes Seaway Trail.

Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy manages the network of Olmsted-conceived parks and parkways within the city of Buffalo through a public/private partnership. Restoration of the parks and parkways is guided by the Conservancy's master plan (the Olmsted City, Buffalo's Olmsted Parks *Plan for the 21st Century*) that promotes sustainable management of the park landscapes, restoring them to Olmsted's original vision while meeting the contemporary recreational needs of park users.

In addition to his work in Buffalo, Frederick Law Olmsted is renowned for his leadership in the creation of the Niagara Reservation, the nation's first state park, which saved Niagara Falls. New York State Parks has studied the original design of the Niagara Reservation (now Niagara Falls State Park) and is working to restore Olmsted's vision for the park landscape.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area and its participating partner, New York State Parks, should collaborate with the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy in interpretation of Olmsted's vision regionally. In the vicinity of Niagara Falls State Park, the themes *Natural Phenomenon* and *Tourism and Recreation* should interpret the Free Niagara movement, Niagara Reservation, and landscape stewardship today. In this interpretation, connections should be drawn to Olmsted's related vision and work in Buffalo. In Buffalo, the Conservancy should draw interpretive connections to the Niagara Reservation. Together, both should relate Olmsted's vision to today's Niagara River Greenway.

With inspiration from Olmsted, the heritage area should support stewardship of the state and local parks along the Niagara River including linkages and enhancements as envisioned in the Greenway Plan and city Comprehensive Plan. The Conservancy's 2008 master plan and its guiding principles should serve as a model for park and landscape stewardship within the heritage area.

ACTION: Support New York State Park's study and rehabilitation of the Olmsted-inspired landscape of the historic Niagara Reservation.

ACTION: Collaborate with the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy on regional interpretation and programming on Olmsted's vision and work.

Destination Marketing Organizations

Chapter 3 of this management plan, *Niagara's Visitor Experience*, discusses visitor experience, marketing, and promotion within the heritage area and recommends a regional collaboration between the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation, Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau (Visit

Buffalo Niagara), and The Lower Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce. Together, these three organizations should collaborate with Niagara Falls Canada Visitor and Convention Bureau, its parent organization Niagara Falls Tourism Association, and the Binational Niagara Tourism Alliance in promoting the Niagara Region to the world.

These destination marketing organizations play an important role in introducing interpretive concepts and opportunities to visitors planning their trips and therefore have an important impact upon the region's identity in the public's mind. These organizations should develop ways to jointly promote sites and itineraries thematically on a regional scale. In Niagara and Erie Counties, the heritage area's themes should be used as a basis for organizing interpretive promotion and information for visitors.

ACTION: Use interpretive themes as a means of presenting the Niagara Region to potential visitors and linking communities, sites, and interpretive opportunities at a regional scale.

2.12.2 Thematic Partners

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area can collaborate on a regional basis with individual interpretive sites associated with any of the heritage area's interpretive themes. The 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study lists a number of sites and resources in Niagara and Erie Counties that are associated with heritage area's themes. Some of the listed sites are part of the regional collaborations discussed in the preceding section of this chapter, such as sites associated with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. During the management plan process, representatives of several interpretive sites attended Commission meetings and expressed their interest in participating in the heritage area program. These included the "Das Haus" German Heritage Museum in Bergholz and the North Tonawanda History Museum.

For each of its interpretive themes, the heritage area should identify sites in Niagara and Erie Counties that could collaborate with presentation of the theme on a regional basis. The Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation and Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau (Visit Buffalo Niagara) should take the lead in identifying and helping to organize these sites, as suggested in the preceding section.

Based upon the range of sites available and their interest in participating, interpretation should be coordinated between the heritage area, groups of thematically related sites, and each individual site. Together, the heritage area and the sites should prepare regional itineraries and interpretive materials by theme. The Niagara 1812 Legacy Council's fold-out interpretive map is a good example of the type of interpretive materials that could be considered.

Each participating site should be expected to enter into a partnership agreement with the heritage area, agreeing to abide by partnership principles and guidelines and agreeing to include information on the heritage area and its regional presentation onsite, on its website, and in published information. The sites should be included in the regional context presented as part of the heritage area's interpretation of each theme. The heritage area should maintain a regional presentation of sites by theme on its website.

The strongest potential thematic associations in Niagara and Erie Counties are those related to the themes *Natural Phenomenon*, *Power and Industry*, and *Underground Railroad*. Sites associated with the theme *Natural Phenomenon* can include any site interpreting the region's natural history. Interpretation related to the Niagara River Greenway, discussed above, is particularly appropriate for a regional initiative.

The City of Buffalo is closely associated with the theme *Power and Industry*, and interpretation of the theme is led by the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. A strong presentation of Buffalo's

industrial history could be created and associated with the heritage area in collaboration with the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society and related sites.

Because they area intended for movement and because of the secretive nature of sites historically associated with the Underground Railroad, a number of interpretive sites related to the theme are located in rural areas of Niagara and Erie Counties, such as Murphy Orchards.

Individual sites interested in participating in the heritage area program should meet the following criteria:

- Be an authentic historic site and/or a museum;
- Be clearly associated with one of the heritage area's interpretive themes;
- Be publicly accessible;
- Offer onsite interpretation (can be exhibits or personal services);
- Have regular hours of operation.

To become involved, individual sites should submit an expression of interest to the heritage area Commission. The expression of interest should outline:

- The site's concept related to heritage area participation;
- The site's vision, mission, and goals;
- A brief self-assessment describing operations, facilities, and existing interpretation; and
- A description of how the site meets the criteria listed above.

ACTION: Develop an ongoing process through which additional sites in Niagara and Erie Counties that could collaborate with the presentation of each heritage area theme on a regional basis may be identified.

ACTION: Within that process, create a procedure through which interested thematically related interpretive sites in Niagara and Erie Counties can apply to participate in the heritage area program, including appropriate criteria, requirements, and guidelines.

ACTION: As part of the heritage area's interpretation of each theme, include presentation of the regional context including participating interpretive sites.

ACTION: Implement regional interpretive initiatives for the most promising themes and subjects in collaboration with regional partners.