NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared by: edr Companies

Prepared for: Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission
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THE NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE AREA
MANAGEMENT PLAN
On July 4, 1776, the fifty-six signatories of the Declaration of Independence pledged their “lives, fortunes, and sacred honor” to defend a bold series of values, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Yet for the millions of enslaved people throughout much of the nascent republic, these values were unattainable. For more than 150 years prior to the Declaration, and another 90 thereafter, slaves were denied these “unalienable” rights. They were legally defined as property, not people; aliens, not citizens. They lacked even the most basic of constitutional protections, endured unimaginable hardship, and labored for generations within a legitimized system designed to preserve the rights of others to deprive them of their liberties and profit from their servitude.

Yet, despite the fact that this oppression was so widely accepted as to be codified into law, tens of thousands of enslaved people resolved to break the bonds of their captivity, seeking freedom through secretive escapes into foreign territory. Many of these freedom seekers traveled north toward the Canadian border, their perilous journeys culminating with clandestine crossings below the famed cataracts of the Niagara River. Although several generations have passed since such dramatic escapes were the necessary price of freedom, the courage of freedom seekers and the cooperation of their accomplices and supporters is not forgotten, but preserved in stories, elusive fragments in public records, accounts in private diaries and letters, and artifacts associated with what became known as the Underground Railroad. It has become a central element of the City of Niagara Falls’ collective heritage, a source of
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pride born out of an otherwise unfortunate chapter in our nation’s history.

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area uncovers the wealth of places and stories associated with the Underground Railroad found within the City of Niagara Falls and the surrounding region. The Heritage Area preserves the historic role of the people of Niagara Falls in facilitating freedom for the oppressed. It recognizes an unparalleled density of resources, narratives, sites, and experiences related to that history, while celebrating the combination of this rich cultural heritage with the internationally recognized majesty of the Niagara Falls.

Whether through dramatic rescues or unheralded passages, freedom seekers and those that came to their aid lived the very words of our nation’s forefathers in risking their lives, fortunes, and honor in the name of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Theirs is a story that deserves to be told far and wide, lest anyone, anywhere, ever take these unalienable rights for granted.

Project Background

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area represents a partnership between the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (hereafter, NYSOPRHP), the City of Niagara Falls, and local stakeholders, under the guidance of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission. The Heritage Area has grown out of the cooperative efforts of local, regional, and state agencies and advocacy groups, as described below.

The New York State Heritage Area Program

The purpose of the Heritage Area Program is to preserve and develop areas of special historical significance in New York State. The program currently features 20 Heritage Areas, which include historic sites, districts, and regions throughout the entire state (see Map 1). These areas have been recognized for their significant contributions to the history, development, and culture of New York State (NYSOPRHP 2007). The Heritage Area Program emphasizes four main goals for each Heritage Area in the state:

- Preservation of significant resources
- Education that interprets lessons from the past
- Recreation and leisure activities
- Economic Revitalization for sustainable communities

Each Heritage Area celebrates unique regional contributions to important historical themes, such as industry, agriculture, national defense, transportation, the natural environment, or civil society. The boundaries of each Heritage Area are designated through enabling legislation. Some, such as the Sackets Harbor Heritage Area (in the Village of Sackets Harbor, Jefferson County), encompass several historical sites within one municipality. Others, such as the Long Island North Shore Heritage Area (in portions of Nassau and Suffolk Counties) or the Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor (spanning all of Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Monroe, and Wayne Counties), include numerous sites and/or areas within multiple municipalities dispersed over a broad region.

Project History

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area grew out of parallel local, state, and national initiatives that mutually recognized not only the wealth and importance of historic sites and narratives related to the
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Underground Railroad in the City of Niagara Falls, but also the potential for the development of heritage tourism opportunities that promote and celebrate those historic resources. These initiatives include the following:

**North Star Initiative.** This initiative is a joint venture formed in 2008 by the City of Niagara Falls and NYSOPRHP for the purpose of fostering the development of a tourism destination in Niagara Falls. A major goal of the North Star Initiative is to advance the development of an Underground Railroad Interpretive Center at the former U.S. Customs and Post Office building (see Customs House Restoration, below) located at the intersection of Whirlpool Street and Ontario Avenue. Other important components of the initiative include the creation of a park honoring Harriet Tubman at the intersection of Whirlpool Street and Ontario Avenue. Other important components of the initiative include the creation of a park honoring Harriet Tubman at the intersection of Ontario Avenue and Main Street, and a partnership with the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission to facilitate pedestrian access to portions of the Whirlpool Bridge, to provide visitors an appreciation of the experience of freedom seekers who crossed the Niagara River gorge into Canada (Forgione 2009a). The North Star Initiative also partners with other regional tourism agencies (such as Niagara USA and the Niagara Falls Tourism Advisory Board) in working more closely with the local community to develop tourism products that all project partners can utilize and promote (Cottrell 2008).
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ENABLING LEGISLATION

On July 21, 2008, New York State Governor David Paterson signed legislation that formally authorized the creation of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area, adding it to the existing system of Heritage Areas located throughout the state. Article 35 of the New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law, Section 35.03 specifically recognizes “the cohesive geographic area of the city of Niagara Falls, Niagara County, associated with and revealing of the community’s place in the development of the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movements and other reform activities” (NYSL 2011a). Article 35 also establishes the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, and sets forth the structure and schedule for adopting a Heritage Area Management Plan (hereafter, Plan).

The enabling legislation outlines several key management responsibilities for the Commission and Plan:

- Designate specific boundaries of the Heritage Area, and depict them on a map within the Plan;
- Develop a vision, goals, and objectives for the area, with specific attention toward appropriate land uses and the educational benefits of the Heritage Area;
- Create inventories of existing public and privately-owned land and buildings;
- Identify other land and buildings that could also contribute to the Heritage Area;
- Recommend methods for networking historic and commercial assets, and for the preservation of appropriate resources within the Heritage Area;
- Evaluate the potential complementary role of the Heritage Area in concurrent local economic development initiatives;
- Describe the long-term planning, development, and management structure of the Heritage Area;
- Plan for the development of the Heritage Area as an academic resource;
- Develop a marketing plan for the Heritage Area;
- Recommend a framework for operations and maintenance; and
- Assess the potential economic costs and benefits of the Heritage Area, both in the short and long term.

Like other Heritage Areas within the state, the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area is subject to specific scheduling criteria. The Commission was granted four years from the effective date of the enabling legislation to draft a management plan, which must be approved by the Niagara Falls City Council prior to its submittal to the NYSOPRHP. Without affirmative actions toward preparing and completing an approved Plan, recognition of the Heritage Area would otherwise be repealed in 2012.

Customs House Restoration. The preservation and rehabilitation of the former U.S. Customs and Post Office building (hereafter, the Customs House) has been in various stages of development since 1987. The Customs House, located at 2245 Whirlpool Street opposite the Whirlpool Bridge, was built in 1863. The building fell into disrepair after being sold by the U.S. Customs Office in 1962. In 1973, the Customs House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (hereafter, NRHP) and was then acquired by the City of Niagara Falls in 2003, after which it was designated a landmark by the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. Restoration of the Customs House is currently underway in association with the proposed construction of the International Railway Station/Intermodal Transportation Center (IRS/ITC) on an adjacent parcel, which is scheduled to be completed in 2013. After restoration of the Customs House is completed, a portion of the first floor will house an Underground Railroad Interpretive Center (hereafter, Interpretive Center) and the second floor will be occupied by offices of the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency (CNF 2008; Riggs Ward 2011; Scheer 2010). The purpose of the Interpretive Center is to provide a gateway to the important Underground Railroad and abolitionist history of the area, and direct visitors to other local and regional attractions. The Interpretive Center will also provide a foundation for future heritage development projects in Niagara Falls.
These initiatives, coupled with strong grassroots advocacy regarding local historic preservation, and interest in the Underground Railroad ultimately led to the formation of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission (hereafter, the Commission), which was authorized by state legislation in 2008 (see Inset Box: Enabling Legislation). In September of 2009, a group of 12 Commissioners were appointed by New York State Governor David Paterson, Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster, and other local and state officials. The Commission held its inaugural meeting in December of 2009 (NFURHAC 2009). The first major undertaking of the Commission is the preparation and publication of this Heritage Area Management Plan.

Niagara Falls International Railway Station & Intermodal Transportation Center: The restored and rehabilitated Customs House and new Intermodal Transportation Center will continue the history of this area as an important international railroad and transportation center into the 21st century (rendering by Wendel Duscherer).
Purpose, Vision, and Goals

The purpose of the Plan is to identify, communicate and celebrate resources within the Heritage Area associated with historic and contemporary experiences with the Underground Railroad. The Commission seeks to engage strategic partners throughout the community in developing these resources into a cultural and educational resource of international renown. Working with a team of project consultants and local stakeholders, the Commission has crafted this Plan as an initial step to direct the establishment, management, and future operations of the Heritage Area. As part of the planning process, the Commission has adopted mission and vision statements, along with a series of goals, to guide future decision regarding the growth and development of the Heritage Area. These statements and goals clearly delineate the purpose of the Heritage Area, and will help to focus the efforts of current and future Heritage Area decision-makers (see inset).

MISSION STATEMENT: NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD COMMISSION

It is the mission of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission to educate and inform the community about the rich local heritage associated with the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement, and to conserve and enhance the historic, cultural, economic and architectural resources of Niagara Falls.

The Commission will accomplish this by working with national, regional, state and local agencies, institutions, and organizations and with the local Niagara Falls residents, as described in this Plan.

VISION STATEMENT: NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD COMMISSION

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission will be known for encouraging and fostering the discovery, illumination, and celebration of the rich heritage of the Underground Railroad and the Abolitionist movement throughout the City of Niagara Falls and its environs, on behalf of current and future generations.
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NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD COMMISSION GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area has further refined the four main goals of the New York State Heritage Area program into specific goals for the Heritage Area that address the Commission’s Mission Statement and Vision Statement:

1. Historic preservation
   a. Support and conduct exceptional research on the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement as well as other related topics.
   b. Identify, designate, and preserve important sites, artifacts, oral and written histories, and landscapes related to the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in the City of Niagara Falls.
   c. Develop resource driven strategies for preserving our city’s unique story, and sharing it with the world.

2. Interpretation and education
   a. Educate the community about their shared heritage regarding African-American and European-American participation in the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement.
   b. Support the development of curriculum and outreach programs to educate children about the local history of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement.
   c. Collaborate with local educational institutions to develop programs related to the topics of the Underground Railroad and heritage tourism.
   d. Communicate that the past stories of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement have relevance to the values of liberty and freedom as they are experienced today and can have a positive influence on the treatment of these values in the future.
   e. Develop events that celebrate the exceptional quality of character exercised by those involved in the fight for freedom and liberty.

3. Recreation
   a. Develop interactive experiences throughout the Heritage Area that appeal to all ages.
   b. Consider including in all programs and special events specific elements that appeal to the tourist primarily interested in recreational activity.
   c. Include healthy and active transportation alternatives throughout the Heritage Area.

4. Economic revitalization through heritage tourism
   a. Capitalize on the existing tourist industry in the Niagara Falls region.
   b. Strengthen connections with the hospitality industry and cultural institutions in Niagara Falls.
   c. Strengthen the heritage tourism programs that specifically address the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls.
   d. Collaborate with the other local and regional institutions and agencies in the development of experiences for heritage travelers, students, and scholars with multiple interests.
   e. Strengthen connections between Underground Railroad and Abolitionist sites and with other cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.
   f. Support quality installations, amenities, and experiences to encourage return visits to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area.
   g. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.
Study Process

In May of 2011, the Commission retained the consulting team of edr Companies, New York Historical Research Associates, Inc., Crawford & Stearns, and the Herzig Group, Inc. to prepare this Plan. The study process to prepare the Plan included: extensive historical research; identification of significant resources; review of existing plans, programs, and partnerships in the region; and a focused outreach and public participation strategy. The consultant team and Commission conducted research, data collection, public meetings, stakeholder interviews, and workshops during the summer and fall of 2011. The public meetings, interviews, and workshops engaged a diverse representation of participants including local residents, business owners, government agency personnel, tourism groups, academics, cultural institutions staff, environmental advocates, and media representatives. The rationale and methods that guided the study process are briefly summarized below.

The Heritage Area Boundary

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area, as defined in Article 35 (Section 35.03) of the New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law, includes the entirety of the municipal limits of the City of Niagara Falls (see Map 2). The City of Niagara Falls is home to approximately 50,000 residents, as well as the internationally renowned Niagara River, its namesake waterfalls, and dramatic gorge. It is widely recognized for tourism and recreational opportunities, and possesses an unparalleled density of historic resources, narratives, sites, experiences, and research opportunities related to the Underground Railroad. The boundary of the Heritage Area was intentionally selected to circumscribe this rich assemblage of cultural, natural, and economic resources for the purpose of protecting and promoting important sites, scenic integrity, and accomplishing the mission and goals of the Commission as outlined in this plan.

Study Process Flow Chart visualizes influences, methods and steps to completion for this project.
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I. THE NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE AREA

The Study Area Boundary

The Heritage Area, much like the Underground Railroad, can only be fully described and understood in relation to its regional connections with broader historical themes, transportation networks, and important sites. To provide this regional context, the study process for the Plan examined a wider area, defined herein as the Study Area, which includes all of Niagara County and the northern portions of neighboring Erie County, including the City of Buffalo (see Map 3). Although the Heritage Area received the greatest emphasis in terms of data collection and analysis, the consultant team also conducted research to identify key sites within the larger Study Area to provide greater context and understanding for evaluating resources and themes within the Heritage Area proper. Identification of existing recreational and tourism networks and other partnering opportunities within the larger Study Area was also essential for developing meaningful recommendations for the ongoing management of the Heritage Area.

Map 3: Study Area Boundary
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Planning Context

Various portions of the Heritage Area and Study Area are subject to assorted local, regional, state, and federal plans for land use, economic development, and/or historic preservation. These plans were reviewed for their potential impact on the development and marketing of the Heritage Area. This assessment revealed the ways in which the Heritage Area Management Plan complements regional goals with respect to tourism, preservation, and the advancement of cultural initiatives. The following concurrent plans and projects were reviewed in this research:

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (Niagara County Center for Economic Development 2011): Niagara County’s 2010 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy outlines several recommended actions organized within 13 categories, each with the intention of revitalizing economic prospects throughout the area. The five central goals of this strategy are to improve the local quality of life, increase employment opportunities through the expansion of key economic sectors, strengthen the competitive position of local businesses, diversify the county’s economic base, and develop a comprehensive education and training program. This plan supports specific local heritage development projects such as the Buffalo Avenue Heritage District, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, and the Niagara Falls National and Underground Railroad Heritage Areas. As with several other concurrent plans that support economic development projects throughout the Underground Railroad Heritage Area, the many other initiatives supported throughout this plan should be reviewed for their impact on valuable historic properties.

Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan (CNF 2009a): The City of Niagara Falls’ 2009 Comprehensive Plan is a pragmatic and forward-thinking plan, written to guide public policy and development initiatives in light of the challenges faced by the municipality and its residents. Although the Comprehensive Plan only briefly acknowledges the development of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area, it focuses substantial attention toward the development of cultural and historical assets in general. The first of eight fundamental “Principles for City Renewal” is to build on core assets, including “the city’s collection of heritage buildings, neighborhoods and traditional commercial districts.” The plan also encourages small-scale incremental changes that complement the city’s unique “heritage fabric”, as well as a series of networked “catalyst projects” that will recognize and celebrate local culture and history. It emphasizes the importance of strategic partnerships focused on a common agenda, for the purpose of leveraging public, private, and non-profit resources to achieve a revitalized city and distinctive sense of place.

Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030 (Niagara County 2009): The county’s Comprehensive Plan provides a wealth of information about the state of the county’s resources, and provides a detailed examination of opportunities, strategies, and recommended actions over a wide range of topical areas. As the population center of Niagara County, the City of Niagara Falls plays a prominent role in every section of the county’s Comprehensive Plan; however, the coverage of the region’s cultural resources is limited to a brief discussion of the Erie Canal corridor. The Comprehensive Plan proposes general and specific actions for development in the county, but these do not specifically bear on the development of the Underground Railroad Heritage Area.

Niagara Falls Core City Urban Renewal Plan (CNF 2009b): The Niagara Falls Core City Urban Renewal Plan responds to recommendations within the City’s 2009 Comprehensive Plan. This plan sets forth the boundaries of the area specifically designated by the City for renewal, as well as the procedures and obligations that developers must meet to gain City approval for redevelopment proposals. The Urban Renewal Plan is intended to build on existing core assets, including historic resources, with the intention of removing blight and improving the quality of the built environment. Like the county’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, this plan should be referenced with regard to specific sites relevant to the history of the Underground Railroad.
I. THE NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE AREA

2009-2013 New York State Historic Preservation Plan (Draft) (NYSOPRHP 2009): This comprehensive document is intended to guide the work of the State Historic Preservation Office for the five-year period from 2009 to 2013. Although the geographic scope is statewide, the breadth and depth of information regarding cultural resource preservation makes this resource particularly significant for the Heritage Area planning effort. This plan helps to provide context for the Heritage Area program (and all other related programs), demonstrating how it fits into the state’s overall heritage preservation efforts. The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area is not referenced directly, as this draft plan was published prior to its inception. However, the establishment of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area is entirely consistent with the vision and goals set forth within the state plan. Implementation of the recommendations articulated within this Management Plan respond directly to the “Call to Action” expressed by the NYSOPRHP.

Niagara Falls, NY 2009 Visitor Report (Longwoods International 2010) and Market Analysis for Tourist Attractions (ERA 2004): These comprehensive analyses detail the characteristics of the tourism market for Niagara Falls and the surrounding region. The many statistics analyzed include (but are not limited to): traveler expenditures; attendance at specific attractions; traveler origin and destination; accommodation performance indicators; comparable destination visitation figures; and visitor demographics. The 2009 Visitor Report analyzes the American side of the Falls only, while the 2004 Market Analysis research analyzes both the Canadian and American markets and attractions. Though not plans per se, these studies provide broad insight into the potential for heritage tourism within the Niagara Falls region.

Niagara River Greenway Vision and Project Proposals (City of Niagara Falls 2006): The City of Niagara Falls’ 2006 vision for the redevelopment of the Greenway provides support for cultural heritage developments in general and the Underground Railroad Heritage Area in particular. The report specifies more than 50 proposed projects throughout the City, both within and outside of the Greenway. Many of the projects recognize the industrial, social, and environmental history of the City, and this document details their capacity to “tell Niagara’s stories”. The Interpretive Center is specifically identified for its potential to contribute to the City’s rich cultural resources.

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan (2006): Although the City of Niagara Falls is not among them, several neighboring and nearby communities are included within the 234 municipalities that comprise the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The development and future direction of the Canalway has been guided by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan, which was approved by both the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Governor of New York in 2006. This plan examines the local, regional, and national significance of the extensive canal system in terms of its impact on the state’s historic and contemporary economy, culture, and environment. The primary goals of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor include fostering and preserving a distinctive sense of place, balancing economic growth with heritage development, and creating a valuable and an internationally recognized travel experience throughout the length of the corridor.

A Cultural Tourism Strategy: Enriching Culture and Building Tourism in Buffalo Niagara (Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth 2005): The Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth at the University of Buffalo has produced a series of studies examining the context and impacts associated with cultural tourism in the Buffalo-Niagara region. As the second phase of this initiative, this strategic plan identifies a vision for regional tourism development, as well as the opportunities and constraints faced by regional cultural tourism stakeholders. This plan calls for the creation of stakeholder groups responsible for the coordination of resources and day-to-day implementation of the plan’s three key recommendations: to organize multi-year, coordinated programs; develop targeted marketing; and promote
I. THE NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE AREA

Infrastructure improvements at the systemic and organizational levels.

**Niagara National Heritage Area Study (NPS 2005):** The Niagara National Heritage Area was designated by Congress in 2008, following several years of consideration by several parties. The 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study presented feasibility analysis for this initiative. Among the four key interpretive themes identified by NPS for the area are “Borderland/Border Crossing” and “Tourism and Recreation”. In addition to analyzing the interpretive themes and affected environment, the NPS study also presents a series of alternative models and strategies for long-term management of the National Heritage Area. Seventeen Underground Railroad sites are specifically identified in the appendix, including six in Niagara County, and a Theme Resource Matrix identifies six regional interpretive facilities related to the “Borderland” theme.

**Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor Management Plan (Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor Planning Commission 2004):** The Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor spans 136 miles across a five-county region across western New York State. The Heritage Corridor was designated by the New York State Legislature in 1999, in recognition of the pivotal role the canal has played in the state’s history, as well as its contemporary significance as a landmark and cultural resource. Although the canal bypasses the City of Niagara Falls en route from Lockport to Buffalo, its presence as a major cultural heritage resource is of significance to the development of the Underground Railroad Heritage Area. The Heritage Corridor Management Plan examines the planning process, general and specific resources within the corridor, and recommendations for the development of canal-related tourism, recreation, and economic development. This document provides valuable insight into regional cultural heritage stakeholders, education and interpretation, and resource stewardship.

**USA Niagara Development Strategy—A Blueprint for the Revitalization of Downtown Niagara Falls (Hunter Interests, Inc. 2002):** Much like the City’s Greenway Vision report, USA Niagara’s “Blueprint” describes a series of 26 projects in three phases, highlighting the potential for phased physical developments to revitalize the local economy. In general, the phases are spatially organized, beginning in the downtown core and spreading north, south, and east in latter phases. USA Niagara’s plan mixes commercial and residential developments, tourist attractions, and accommodations. “Ballpark” visitation, spending, and employment estimates are provided in a base estimate of economic and fiscal impacts, as well as the direct and indirect impacts of construction spending. While this report does not specifically detail cultural heritage developments, it does forecast the “development of important cultural and heritage attractions” as a result of strategy implementation. It is noted that in the decade following the publication of this report, many of these projects have been completed, or at least initiated, and some have been discarded.

These reports and plans are important aspects of the context within which the Underground Railroad Heritage Area will be developed. Each brings a vision for the community’s future to bear on the creation, interpretation, and management of heritage sites. Although each plan may reflect a particular subject area, geographic area, or intended outcome, they share common goals for economic development that are sustainable and respectful of local resources. In celebrating local history and providing additional cultural attractions to bolster local tourism initiatives, the Underground Railroad Heritage Area is consistent with, and complementary to, those goals.

### Historical Research

The mission of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission is to educate and inform the community about the rich local heritage associated with the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement, and to conserve and enhance the historic, cultural, economic and architectural resources of Niagara Falls. The goals of historical research efforts for the Heritage Area Management Plan were to identify the people, places, and stories in and around
I. THE NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE AREA

HISTORICAL RESEARCH CONTRIBUTORS

Underground Railroad research requires passionate commitment, support, and dedication. The success of the historical research for the project would not have been possible without the contributions of numerous scholars, community members, consultants, and volunteers. The following individuals and institutions deserve recognition and sincere gratitude for their invaluable contributions to the project:

Pete Ames, Oakwood Cemetery Association  |  David Anderson, Nazareth College  |  Craig Bacon, Deputy Historian, Niagara County  |  Michael Boston, Historian, State University of New York at Brockport  |  William Bradberry, Niagara Falls Tourism Advisory Board  |  Anthony Cohen, Menare Foundation, Maryland  |  Kevin Cottrell, Director, Northstar Initiative  |  Christopher Densmore, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore  |  Tom DeSantis, Planning Department, City of Niagara Falls  |  Gretchen Duling, Historian, Youngstown  |  Denise Easterling, Niagara Falls Tourism Advisory Board  |  Catherine Emerson, Niagara County Historian  |  Karolyn Smards Frost, Tubman Research Center, York University  |  Paul Gromoslak, Independent Historian  |  Michelle Kratts, Oakwood Cemetery Association, Lewiston Public Library  |  Kate Clifford Larson, Historian, Biographer  |  Charles Lenhart, Project Researcher  |  Ann Marie Linnabery, Niagara County Historical Society  |  Wilma Morrison, B.M.E. Church, Lundy’s Lane, ON  |  Marjorie Allen Perez, Historian, Wayne County  |  Linda Rehnumagl, Librarian, Niagara Falls Public Library  |  Cynthia Van Ness, BuffaloResearch.com  |  Tanya Warren, Historian, Consultant  |  LouAnn Wurst, Western Michigan University  |  Tom Yots, Preservation Studios

The City of Niagara Falls that illuminate our understanding of the Underground Railroad and celebrate the courage of the men and women who sought, and/or helped others to achieve, freedom from enslavement during the mid-nineteenth century. Research efforts were directed by the award-winning Underground Railroad historian Dr. Judith Wellman of New York Historical Research Associates. Historical research for the project included review of primary and secondary sources such as manuscripts, census records, historical maps, memoirs and autobiographies, local and county histories, newspapers, and oral traditions. A more detailed description of the historical research methods for the project is included in the Historic Resources Survey report included as Appendix C of this plan.

Much research has already been done on the Underground Railroad in Niagara County, and rich primary resources exist in the Niagara Falls Public Library, the Niagara County Historian’s Office, the History Center of Niagara County, the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, and the Castellani Art Museum. Except for sporadic efforts such as the work of Frank Severance (1899), Ginger Strand (2008), tours offered by Kevin Cottrell of Motherland Connexions, the exhibit at the Castellani Art Museum (2011), and articles in local periodicals, very little has been written about the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls. The Historic Resources Survey prepared for this Plan is the first effort to systematically identify Underground Railroad

Local/regional historian’s stakeholder group interview. City Hall (Niagara Falls), July 28, 2011.
I. THE NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE AREA

sites in the City of Niagara Falls, using a wide variety of sources, many of them now available on the web.

Unlike traditional windshield surveys, which focus on the character and integrity of structures in the extant built environment, the Historic Resources Survey was focused on exploring historical themes. Research in primary sources focused on Niagara County and Niagara Falls. Results from this research phase are summarized in two databases, one of all African Americans listed in federal and state census records in Niagara County from 1850-1880 and the other listing names of people involved in abolitionism or the Underground Railroad in Niagara County. Both of these are available at the website of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area: www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org.

■ Significant Resource Inventory

The Niagara Region (and the City of Niagara Falls in particular) welcomes millions of tourists each year who are attracted to the area’s wealth of natural, historic, and cultural resources. The Heritage Area includes diverse cultural, historical, natural, agricultural, and recreational opportunities, sites, areas, and networks. Significant resources located in the Heritage Area and throughout the Study Area were identified in public agency inventories, municipal and regional directories, as well as online data sources (including publicly available and subscription-based Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, data sources) and published tourism guides (e.g., Vanderwilt 2010). Significant resources within the Heritage Area are described in Chapter II.

■ Public Participation

The development of the Plan required a substantial amount of public participation. The input of the community was invaluable in shaping the vision, objectives, and implementation measures put forth throughout the Plan. Public participation throughout the Heritage Area planning process served as a source of education both for the community and the Commission. In many respects, it helped to build a foundation of support for the Heritage Area by encouraging civic engagement and integrating local information, ideas, and opportunities into the strategies and recommendations presented herein.

The public participation process incorporated stakeholder interviews, public informational meetings, community workshops, and a project website, each component fulfilling particular needs related to these three goals. These components, summarized below, are further discussed in Chapter II:

остояtkier Interviews.
The Commission sought to develop a deep knowledge base concerning local cultural resources, the local economy, and opportunities for growth in tourism and related industries.

To garner this critical knowledge, local and regional stakeholders were invited to participate in group interviews, which provided them with opportunities to directly inform the recommendations for improving and managing the Heritage Area. Each group represented a different segment of the community. The interviews were similar in structure, though not necessarily content. Each was guided by a basic outline of questions, and often provided the Commission with new and valuable insights as the conversations evolved. Stakeholder groups were largely identified using local contacts, and represented several different interest areas. Invitees included:

- Public sector representatives
- Local tourism representatives and business owners
- Regional and local historians
- Non-governmental organizations, including local non-profits and church leaders
- Local neighborhood advocates and representatives
- Local education professionals and students

Public Informational Meetings.
One of the primary project goals was to develop the Heritage Area as a resource that could be embraced and enjoyed by the public. A continual two-way flow of communication and ideas was and is critical to the success of the Heritage Area. To that end, two public meetings were held to
I. THE NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE AREA

Project Website.

Project-related information was made readily available at all times on the internet, at www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org. The site was developed at the project’s outset and maintained throughout the development of the Plan. It served as a document repository, allowing community members to browse draft documents, illustrative maps, historical material, project status reports, and summaries of all meetings and workshops.

Community Workshops.

The consulting team developed interactive workshops to further engage the public through interactive exercises intended to educate participants and challenge them to interpret their local heritage. Three interactive exercises were designed for the workshops, each with a specific purpose. The first activity was the “Visual Thesaurus”, a modified word association exercise intended to spur creative thinking. The second activity, “Site Interpretation”, built on the Visual Thesaurus by introducing participants to a particular site within the City of Niagara Falls which played a documented role in the local Underground Railroad network. The final activity was the “Tour Guide” exercise. In this exercise, each participant was presented with a scenario in which they were asked to design a local tour for a particular person or group. These activities are described in greater detail in Chapter II (see Public Participation- Methods, page 40) and in Appendix B.

disseminate project related information and collect general feedback from the community. The focus of these meetings was twofold: first, to inform the public of progress and important decisions; and second, to provide a forum for questions from the public.
II. Defining the Heritage Area

Just as the Heritage Area Management Plan exists within the context of concurrent planning efforts (as described in Chapter I), so too do individual Heritage Area sites exist within the context of contemporary land use and socioeconomic trends developing throughout the City of Niagara Falls and the surrounding region. The Study Area includes a number of resources and characteristics that pose both opportunities and constraints for the management of the Heritage Area. These resources and characteristics include other natural and cultural resources, facilities, and networks, the demographic landscape of the region, the health of the local economy, and the interests of the public as reflected in their participation in the Heritage Area planning process.

The identification of these resources and characteristics assists in defining the Heritage Area by giving shape to the context within which particular site improvements, programming, and other activities may be supported by surrounding land uses, the local economy, and the interests of stakeholders. They have been identified through a combination of methods, including site visits, analysis of publicly available data, and interaction with community members. Many of these characteristics point to the potential for the Heritage Area to bring value to the community on several levels, most significantly as a destination for cultural heritage tourism, as discussed in Chapter IV.
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

Map 4: Natural Resources within the Heritage Area
Significant Resources

The City of Niagara Falls and surrounding region is internationally recognized for its outstanding natural and scenic resources, tourism and recreational opportunities, and historic sites. Significant resources within the Heritage Area (and surrounding Study Area) include natural resources, cultural institutions, agricultural areas, historic sites, tourism and recreational facilities, and various recreational/tourism-related networks. These significant resources are described below.

- **Natural Resources**
  
  By far, the most significant natural resources of the Niagara Falls area are the Falls themselves, which include the Horseshoe Falls on the Canadian side of the border and the American and Bridal Veil Falls on the United States side. The Niagara Falls originated after the last glacial retreat as meltwater from the upper Great Lakes watershed flowed through the Niagara River and over the Niagara Escarpment near the Village of Lewiston. Over the past 12,000 years, the Falls have eroded the cliff and slowly moved upstream to their present day location between the U.S. and Canadian cities of Niagara Falls, carving the Niagara Gorge along the way. The retreat of the Niagara Falls also resulted in
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

NIAGARA GORGE

The Niagara Gorge is a 6.8-mile long gorge carved by the Niagara River’s retreating waterfalls. In addition to breathtaking views and outstanding freshwater sport fishing, the gorge also supports remarkable biodiversity. According to the New York State Natural Heritage Program (2007), “The Niagara Gorge’s unique combination of waterfall misting, wet seepage areas interspersed with dry open rock faces, and calcareous bedrock produces one of the most diverse assemblages of rare plants within New York State.”

The formation of the Niagara Whirlpool, which is located roughly halfway between the Niagara Escarpment and the present-day location of the Niagara Falls. As the Falls retreated through this area they encountered Saint David’s Buried Gorge, a pre-glacial river valley filled in with soft glacial silt and stone, which quickly eroded and carved out the 125-foot deep Whirlpool basin. Presently, waters of the Niagara River flow into the Whirlpool and make a 90 degree turn, creating the swirling whirlpool effect.

Natural resources within the Heritage Area (see Map 4) are featured in the Niagara Falls, Whirlpool, and DeVeaux Woods State Parks.

- **Niagara Falls State Park** is the oldest state park in the United States. This park extends roughly one mile upstream and one mile downstream of the American Falls on the mainland and also includes Goat Island, which lies between the American and Horseshoe Falls. In addition to providing up-close views of the Falls, this park offers numerous activities and attractions including the Cave of the Winds tour, Maid of the Mist boat tours, the Niagara Scenic Trolley, the Aquarium of Niagara, the Niagara Falls Observation Tower, and the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center. These activities and attractions are further discussed below, in the subsection entitled “Tourism and Recreational Facilities”. The park Visitor Center provides maps and information as well as interpretive displays and exhibits featuring Niagara Falls. The Niagara Gorge Trailhead Center (at the Discovery Center) provides access to and information about the 14.5-mile Niagara Gorge Trail System, which allows visitors to experience views of the falls as well as the rich biodiversity of the area (Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation 2011; Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts at Niagara, Inc. 2011).

- **Whirlpool State Park** is adjacent to the Whirlpool Rapids, located two miles north of the falls. The park stretches along approximately two miles of the Niagara Gorge to the northern border of the Heritage Area. It is located at a prominent point along the Niagara River, which was once home to a station along the Great Gorge Route railway. Whirlpool State Park features overlooks of the Niagara Whirlpool, Whirlpool Rapids, and Niagara Escarpment from its upper level, and nature trails and fishing access on the lower level. Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours are available to experience the white water up close and the park boasts spectacular scenery and premiere freshwater fishing (Conheady 2011; NYSOPRHP 2011b).

- **DeVeaux Woods State Park** is located adjacent to Whirlpool State Park, in between Robert Moses State Parkway and Lewiston Road. The park has remarkable natural
and historical significance. After the death of Judge Samuel DeVeaux in 1852, this site became home to DeVeaux College, serving homeless and orphaned boys. The property has changed hands several times since the closure of the school in 1971; ownership and occupants have included Niagara County, the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara University, Orleans Niagara BOCES, Niagara County Community College, and its current owner, NYSOPRHP. DeVeaux Woods State Park is perhaps best known for its approximately 10 acres of old-growth forest and its remaining historic buildings. Park amenities include trails, ball fields, picnic areas and a playground, as well as ice skating during the winter months (NYSOPRHP 2011b).

- **Devil’s Hole State Park** is located in the northernmost reach of the Heritage Area, and features a rich and violent history dating back to colonial-era conflicts between Native Americans and European settlers. The park overlooks the lower Whirlpool rapids and features a walkway and access road that descend down into the gorge, offering spectacular views and fishing opportunities (Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation 2011; NYSOPRHP 2011b).

Visitation to the Niagara Falls State Park (also known as the Niagara Reservation) has been increasing in recent years, and is discussed in further detail in Chapter III. Other places to enjoy the natural resources of the greater Study Area (see Map 5) include Onondaga Escarpment Unique Area, Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve and Environmental Education Center and a number of State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas.

### Cultural Institutions

The Heritage Area hosts a variety of cultural institutions (see Map 6) rich in history, arts, education and entertainment.

- **The Niagara Arts and Cultural Center** (NACC) is the largest multi-arts center in Upstate New York. The NACC houses two galleries, two theaters, numerous artist studios, and a gift shop and café. The NACC also offers a number of classes, both for children and adults, in the areas of art, music, dance and technology. It is housed in Niagara Falls’ former central high school, which is featured on both state and federal registries of structures. The adaptive reuse of this historic building is the result of a grassroots effort led by a local preservation organization (NACC 2011).

- **The Castellani Art Museum** of Niagara University specializes in contemporary and folk art, and is located just outside of the Heritage Area within the Niagara University Campus. Among the museum’s collections is a multi-media exhibit evoking the legacy of the Underground Railroad, and the Charles Rand Penney Collection of Historical Niagara Falls Prints. The Castellani Art Museum at the

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**THE CASTELLANI ART MUSEUM**

The Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University hosts a permanent exhibit titled “Freedom Crossing: The Underground Railroad in Greater Niagara.” Visitors experience the legacy of the Underground Railroad through the exhibit's historical documents (including photographs of activists, safe houses, and crossing sites), artifacts, and video and audio stations. Historical figures featured in the exhibit include Harriet Tubman, William Wells Brown and Thomas Root.
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

Map 6: Cultural Institutions within the Heritage Area
Falls (a satellite gallery of the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University) is located in downtown Niagara Falls and features emerging regional artists and Niagara Falls-themed art (Castellani Museum 2011; Rochester-Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission 2011).

- **The Niagara Gorge Discovery Center**, operated by NYSOPRHP, is a very popular attraction showcasing the history of Niagara Falls and the surrounding area with interactive displays, a virtual elevator trip into the gorge, and a multi-screen theater replaying 12,000 years of Niagara River history. The building also serves as the information outlet for local hiking and biking trails (Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation 2011; Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts at Niagara, Inc. 2011).

- **The Niagara Science Museum** specializes in the preservation and appreciation of antique science instruments (Niagara Science Museum 2011).

- **The Rapids Theatre** is a fully restored movie theater built in 1921, currently a popular performing arts venue featuring national and international acts (Rapids Theatre 2011).

- **The Das Haus German Heritage Museum** celebrates the history and lasting impact of the hundreds of Prussian Lutherans that settled in Niagara County in the mid-nineteenth century (Leonard 2012).
Additional cultural resources are located throughout the Study Area (see Map 7), particularly within the Cities of Buffalo, North Tonawanda and Lockport. Additionally, many of the Towns within the Study Area have museums displaying local history.

### Agricultural Resources

The boundary of the Heritage Area follows the limits of the City of Niagara Falls and is comprised of urban land uses. However, the greater Study Area is rich in agricultural resources (see Map 8). Over 40 percent of the Study Area lies within designated Agricultural Districts. These districts encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production through the use of landowner incentives and protections favoring agricultural use (NYSDAM 2011). Agricultural products of the area include (but are not limited to) corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, fruits, vegetables and dairy products. Livestock consists primarily of cattle, sheep, horses and goats. Niagara County stands out as 9th in the State for its production of grain but also ranks high for some less common crops. For example, Niagara County is the top producer of popcorn in the state and ranks 5th among counties in value of production of fruits and berries (Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County 2011). The public can experience local agriculture first hand at working farms such as Murphy Orchards (also an Underground Railroad Interpretive Site), Becker Farms, and the 150-year old Blackman
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

MURPHY ORCHARDS

Family-owned and operated Murphy Orchards in the nearby town of Burt offers fresh fruit in season, homemade goods, a Country Barn Store, tea rooms and a gift shop. The farm was established in 1850 by Charles McClew, who may have been an abolitionist and participant in the Underground Railroad. Located beneath the floor of the barn that now houses the orchard gift store and educational exhibits is a concealed room, which local tradition holds may have been used to shelter individuals escaping slavery. Additionally, nearby Hopkins Creek may have been used as one of many creek-bed pathways traveled by these individuals to avoid detection as they made their way toward Canada. The Underground Railroad history tour offered at Murphy Orchards includes a presentation of Underground Railroad history, a walk along Hopkins Creek and a view of the entrance to the concealed room under the barn.

Homestead Farm (Murphy Orchards 2009; Becker Farms 2011; Essentials Design Group 2011).

The unique microclimate created by the Niagara Escarpment and Lake Ontario in combination with fertile soils and beautiful countryside scenery of the Niagara region constructs the perfect environment for vineyards and wineries. Over a dozen wineries are located within the Study Area, primarily along Lake Ontario and along the Niagara Escarpment in the north central portion of the Niagara County. Area wineries offer a rich diversity of wines from classic European and native grapes to hybrids, fruit and sparkling wines (Niagara Wine Trail 2011; Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation 2011).

Historic Resources

The Heritage Area includes three historic districts listed on the NRHP (the DeVeaux School, Chilton Avenue-Orchard Parkway, and Park Place Historic Districts), and 19 individually listed properties, including all of Niagara Falls State Park (which is listed as Niagara Reservation, the name it was established under in 1885) (see Maps 9 and 10) (National Register of Historic Places 2011). These resources are primarily located in the western portion of the Heritage Area and are most concentrated in the downtown area. The Niagara Reservation and Adams Power Plant Transfer House are also National Historic

OLD FORT NIAGARA

Visit Old Fort Niagara to learn firsthand about the fascinating history of the site as it changed hands between French, British and American control throughout the colonial wars and served as a barracks and training station for both World Wars. Old Fort Niagara was restored between 1926 and 1934 and is presently one of the area’s most popular historic attractions. To find out more about Old Fort Niagara, please visit the Old Fort Niagara Association’s website: http://oldfortniagara.org/
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

Map 9: Historic Resources within the Heritage Area
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

Landmarks. Additionally, the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission has identified 174 properties or buildings of historic significance within the City (CNFHPC 2011).

Seven roadside historic markers are located within the Heritage Area, concentrated primarily along Buffalo Avenue and Portage Road. Although the markers do not indicate any formal protection or status for these sites, they do serve an important role in commemorating the Native American and Colonial-era history of the area (New York State Museum 2011).

An additional 173 NRHP-listed historic sites and districts are located within the Study Area (see Map 11), most heavily concentrated near and within the Cities of Buffalo and Lockport. Twenty-three additional State Historic Markers are scattered throughout the Study Area, although they are most heavily concentrated within the Heritage Area. The Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site also occurs within the Study Area, in the City of Buffalo (NPS 2011b).

Old Fort Niagara is one of the Study Area’s most popular historic sites and is both a National Historic Landmark and a New York State Historic Site. Old Fort Niagara is situated near Youngstown on a bluff overlooking the mouth of the Niagara River where it flows into Lake Ontario, a location that was critical in efforts to control access to the Great Lakes. Visitors can explore the site’s eighteenth and

Map 10: Historic Resources within the Heritage Area - Detail
nineteenth-century military architecture and fortifications and learn about the rich history of the site through living history events and programs, historical exhibits and collections and educational programs (Old Fort Niagara Association 2004).

Tourism and Recreational Facilities
In addition to the natural, cultural, and historic attractions previously described, there is a wealth of tourist and recreational resources within and nearby the Heritage Area (see Maps 12 and 13). Popular tourist attractions include, but are not limited to:

- Maid of the Mist
- Cave of the Winds
- The Aquarium of Niagara
- The Niagara Power Vista
- Earl W. Brydges Artpark
- Rainbow Air Helicopter Tours
- Prospect Point Park
- The Niagara Falls Observation Tower
- Seneca Niagara Casino
- Adventure Theater
- The islands of the Niagara River (Goat Island, Luna Island, Three Sisters Islands)
- Thunder Theater
- Krow’s Nest Family Fun Center
- Haunted House of Wax
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

Map 12: Tourism and Recreational Facilities within the Heritage Area
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

- Daredevil Museum
- Wax Museum of History

There are multiple visitor centers in the Downtown/falls area, including the NTCC/Niagara USA Official Visitor Center, the Visitor Center at Niagara Falls State Park, and the privately-operated One Niagara Welcome Center.

With respect to lodging, there are a number of hotels, motels and bed and breakfast accommodations within the Heritage Area, in addition to a few campgrounds, cottages and hostels. Some of the more unique hotel options include The Giacomo Hotel, the Red Coach Inn, and the Seneca Niagara Casino and Hotel. Hotels and motels are most concentrated along Niagara Falls Boulevard throughout the City and in the general downtown area, some offering views of the Niagara River (Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation 2011).

Aside from the state parks previously discussed, one of the most notable recreational use areas in the Heritage Area is Hyde Park, known as “the Jewel of Niagara Falls” (CNF 2007). It is the largest city park in Upstate New York and offers three golf courses, bocce, lawn bowling, tennis, baseball, swimming, fishing and ice hockey/skating in the winter. Other recreational facilities in the Heritage Area include a number of municipal parks such as D’Amelio Park, Gill Creek Park, 70th Street Park, Lasalle and Lasalle Waterfront Parks, Jayne Park, Griffon...
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

There are also two main bike paths running east/west through the Heritage Area toward the Niagara Falls. One follows the Niagara River along the southern edge of the City and the other (NYS Bicycle Route 5) is located along Route 62 through the center of the City. There are plenty of hiking opportunities in the Heritage Area as well. The Niagara Gorge Trailhead Center provides information on hiking opportunities within the 14.5-mile Niagara Gorge Trail system, which extends from Niagara Falls to Lewiston, and offers four guided hikes during the summer months. Finger Lakes Trail, a footpath that extends across New York State, also occurs within the Heritage area, following a portion of the Niagara River, passing the falls and terminating at the Rainbow Bridge.

Located north of the Heritage Area in the Village of Lewiston, the Freedom Crossing Monument is a popular tourist attraction memorializing the area’s role in the Underground Railroad. Additional tourist resources include a number of parks and golf courses scattered throughout the Study Area (see Map 14), but more heavily concentrated in Erie County. Fishing and boating are popular recreational activities in the Study Area, with outstanding world class freshwater sport fishing and public boat launches spread out along Niagara River, the Erie Canal and Lakes Erie and Ontario (Erie County 2011). Bike trails are available throughout the Study Area, particularly along the Niagara River, and the multi-use Erie Canalway Trail runs adjacent to the canal. Tourist attractions and facilities
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

Networks

Existing recreational and tourism-related networks within the Heritage Area (see Map 15) include the Great Lakes Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway, the Niagara Wine Trail and the Western Erie Canal New York State Heritage Corridor.

- **The Great Lakes Seaway Trail** National Scenic Byway is a 518-mile route through Pennsylvania and New York along the shoreline of Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. In addition to scenic views, the trail also incorporates a number of historical locations, cultural heritage sites and fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities. Seaway Trail kiosks and interpretive panels are located along the route to inform travelers of significant sites (Seaway Trail, Inc. 2011; NYSDOT 2011a).

- **The Niagara Wine Trail** occurs within the Study Area, connecting many of the aforementioned wineries. The trail consists of two routes: the Niagara Wine Trail route, which follows Lake Ontario shoreline to the Village of Wilson and then drops south, and the Niagara Escarpment Wine Trail route, which follows the contour of the Escarpment and connects the wineries to Niagara Falls (Niagara Wine Trail 2011).

- **The Western Erie Canal New York State Heritage Corridor** incorporates all of Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Monroe and Wayne Counties. The Erie Canal traverses New York State, connecting the Hudson River to Lake Erie, and was an engineering marvel as well as an important means of travel and transport in its day. The Heritage Area boasts the longest remaining sections of the original alignment of the Erie Canal, canal locks and lift bridges as well as remnants of Native American settlement and industrialization of the area (NYSOPRHP 2011c; Western Erie Canal Alliance 2011).

Additional networks that occur within the Study Area (see Map 15) include the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (lies within and extends east beyond the Western Erie Canal NYS Heritage Corridor) and the Theatre District and Michigan Street African American New York State Heritage Corridors (Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor 2008).

The Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor includes historic sites significant to African American history, culture and reform activities including:

- The Michigan Street Baptist Church, which was the first Black church in Buffalo and a station on the Underground Railroad.
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

WESTERN ERIE CANAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

"The western Erie Canal corridor is a living landscape of historic and contemporary significance. It is distinguished by presence of the canal because the canal’s imprint endures on the land and is part of the consciousness of the people of northwestern New York State."

"The fact that New York State’s Erie Canal has endured to be a functioning waterway into the twenty-first century is a testament to its significance for the state and nation. Its survival is in contrast to many other nineteenth-century American canals that have long ceased operation."

-Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor Management Plan
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

- The Home of Reverend Dr. Jesse E. Nash, who was the pastor at the Michigan Street Baptist Church from 1892 to 1953 and a legendary leader in Buffalo’s African American community. Reverend Nash was instrumental in founding the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
- The Colored Musician’s Club was chartered by one of the earliest African American musicians’ unions and is the only remaining African American jazz club in the United States (Bemstein 2011; Michigan Street Baptist Church 2011; NYSOPRHP 2007).

Land Use
Public land uses within the Heritage Area include state and local parks, public schools, post offices, government buildings, police and fire protection, and other community/public service land uses. Private land uses include primarily residential, commercial, recreation/entertainment and industrial uses. The variety and extent of various land uses within the Heritage Area is shown in Table 1 and Map 16.

The 2009 City Zoning Ordinance supports these land uses and guides future land use development. Purposes of the Zoning Ordinance include enhancing the relationships between and among residential, commercial, industrial and open space areas while protecting and enhancing the character, social and economic stability, and beneficial development of each of these areas. Vacant properties throughout the City (most notably within commercial and industrial districts) have become a growing concern in recent years, particularly since the onset of the economic recession in 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Parcel Count</th>
<th>Approximate Size (Acres)</th>
<th>Percent of Total Size</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>16,998</td>
<td>2,240</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>3,581</td>
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<td>910</td>
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<td>Community Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Parks, Wild, Forested and Conservation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and Entertainment</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>400</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

Map 16: Land Use within the Heritage Area
Within the Heritage Area, the greatest density of sites related to the operation of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement are located within the vicinity of Buffalo Avenue, Rainbow Boulevard, and Old Falls Street (see Chapter III). This corner of the Heritage Area contains several Underground Railroad sites, spanning downtown Niagara Falls from the riverfront to the mixed commercial and residential neighborhoods to the east and north of the historic downtown. At present, this area is dominated by large commercial blocks and parking lots, as well as several vacant properties.

A second cluster of sites is located to the north of Niagara Falls’ historic downtown. Several sites are found near the intersection of Main Street and Ontario Avenue, near the former Suspension Bridge (now the neighborhood adjacent to the Whirlpool Bridge). This area features smaller lot sizes and a greater diversity of land uses, though many of the properties are not very well-kept. The land use pattern is more traditional than that wrought by urban renewal in the historic downtown, with commercial uses dominating Main Street and the corner lots of side streets, and residential uses within the interior blocks. At the southern end of this cluster of sites, the Oakwood Cemetery and the Niagara Falls Public Library buffer a largely residential area from the commercial areas along Main Street and the west side of Portage Road.

### Demographic & Economic Context

The long-term success of the Underground Railroad Heritage Area will be shaped by the ability of stakeholders to support investments in the Heritage Area’s assets and operations, and their commitment to doing so. In this way, the relationship between the Heritage Area and the people of Niagara Falls is reciprocal. The Heritage Area will serve as a source of community identity, education, and improvement; the community will serve as supporters, consumers, and stewards of this valuable resource. In order to establish the community’s capacity for support of the Heritage Area, and to determine a baseline to which socioeconomic impacts of the Heritage Area might be measured, it is necessary to examine the current demographic and economic context of the Niagara Falls region. A further examination of the data supporting this analysis is presented in Appendix A.

#### Demographic Trends

The 2010 Census revealed populations of 50,193 and 216,469 for the City of Niagara Falls and Niagara County, respectively. Populations in both the City and County have been in decline since their peak in 1960. Since that time, the population of the City has declined by 51%; the County’s decline has not been quite as drastic (at only 11%), due to the relative growth of suburbs. Prior to their peak, populations in both had been increasing steadily throughout the 20th century, as heavy industry brought new employees to settle in the area. The decline of regional industries and widespread suburbanization dispersed the urban population toward outlying areas beginning in the 1960’s, a trend which continues to this day.

Current demographics of the City of Niagara Falls area highlight the differences between, and similarities to, the surrounding region and the State of New York as a whole. As compared to the surrounding county, the City of Niagara Falls is home to a greater proportion of non-family households, and features a slightly smaller average household size, a comparison which is generally consistent with other cities and their associated suburbs. The City of Niagara Falls’ residents inhabited 22,603 households as of 2010, with an estimated average household size of 2.24 residents.

One of the most conspicuous differences between the City and surrounding region is seen in their respective racial composition. The City of Niagara Falls is substantially less white than both the county and the Buffalo-Niagara Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), though not quite as racially diverse as the state as a whole. As in the county, metropolitan region, and state, the vast majority of residents in the City of Niagara Falls identify themselves as being of a single racial background. However, the proportion of City residents that self-identify as
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

The age profile of the City of Niagara Falls is largely consistent with that of the surrounding region. Some notable differences exist in the proportion of 35-44 year-olds, and those aged 65 and above. The City is home to a substantially smaller proportion of 35-44 year-olds than what is found in the region and state, whereas it leads all other comparison areas in the proportion of senior/elderly populations.

The distribution of school-age residents through grade levels is almost identical between Niagara Falls and the surrounding region, with a few notable differences. The proportion of Niagara Falls residents having achieved only a high school diploma (or its equivalency) is higher than that of Niagara County (and substantially higher than that of the metropolitan area and state), whereas the proportion of residents having achieved at least a bachelor’s degree is less than that of all comparison areas.

Economic Trends

An examination of regional economic patterns underscores the hardship experienced throughout the metropolitan area in the previous decade and beyond; however, these statistics are not without their encouraging signs. Most employed residents in the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan area are government employees, of which local governments employ the largest share (approximately 63% on average). While some industries, such as health care and social assistance, have seen moderate growth in the past decade, precipitous declines in the manufacturing sector have contributed heavily to regional unemployment. The unemployment rate within the City of Niagara Falls is significantly higher than that of the county, region, and state, although all follow similar long-term patterns. As of late 2011, monthly unemployment has improved slightly from 2010 levels; however, the overall (non-seasonally adjusted) rate remains close to 10% (NYSDOL, 2011b). This number is down slightly from a recent peak at 8.5%, but is substantially higher than the average rate throughout the previous two decades.

In contrast to these employment statistics, regional gross domestic product across all industries (GDP) has grown slowly over the past decade, as has GDP per capita. Regional trends in per capita personal income (PCPI) levels have been slightly less clear; PCPI in the metropolitan region has been less than the nationwide average in every year since at least 1990, although the trend has shown improvement since its recent low point in 2006.

Although fundamentally different than many other local attractions with regard to historical or educational importance, the economic impact of the Heritage Area will nonetheless likely be measured in terms of its ability to attract visitors and generate local spending. The seasonal travel and tourism sector is a primary economic driver within the City of Niagara Falls. The impact of this sector on the larger regional economy is a function of the overall number of visitors, their spending patterns, and the length of time they spend in the area.

The New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) defines the travel and tourism employment sector as a portion of the overall employment within a number of related industries, including accommodations, culture/recreation/amusements, food service, passenger transportation, and travel retail (NYSDOL 2011a). In 2009, Niagara County contained 57 accommodation options, including hotel/motels, Bed-and-Breakfasts, and campgrounds. In addition, there were 163 full-service restaurants, 139 limited-service restaurants, and 62 bars. Institutions and venues related to arts, culture, and entertainment included eight museums or historical sites, four performing arts companies, and 62 businesses within the amusement, gambling,
and recreation sub-sectors. Retail businesses included 95 food and beverage stores, 64 gas stations (52 with convenience stores), and 24 gift and novelty stores. There were 24 businesses in the transit and ground passenger transportation sub-sector, and an additional seven companies in the scenic and sightseeing transportation business (U.S. Census Bureau 2011b).

The NYSDOL assumes that a certain percentage of employment throughout these businesses is directly influenced by travel and tourism. For example, 100% of the employment at museums and historic sites is attributed to the travel and tourism sector, but only 20% of the employment at full-service restaurants (NYSDOL 2011a). Cumulatively, these positions comprise a significant portion of the employment opportunities within the Niagara Falls region. In fact, Niagara County has a larger proportion of jobs in the travel and tourism sector than all but five of the 62 counties in New York State; of those five, four are in rural northern New York, and do not feature the economic diversity of Niagara County. The travel and tourism sector is estimated to have directly employed more than 5,100 people, who earned more than $126 million, in 2009 (the most recent year for which data is available). This accounted for 7.3% of all jobs and 5.1% of all wages in Niagara County in that year. Although the development of the Heritage Area, in and of itself, may have only incremental impacts on some of these businesses, it is one of several local developments which, taken cumulatively, could produce significant economic benefit. These include, but are not limited to, the development of the National Park Service’s Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, the city’s proposed Cultural District, and improvements to downtown streetscapes and the waterfront. Because the travel and tourism sector is firmly established in the city and region, efforts to develop new attractions, amenities, and services will benefit from the existing labor force, support networks, and potential packaging partnerships.

Like any cultural or tourism-related amenity within the Niagara Falls region, the economic benefits of the Heritage Area will largely occur on the margins of the primarily falls-based visitation market. While secondary attractions may pull in smaller audiences of their own, their principal collective influence is to broaden the “built-in” market. Given adequate options, visitors to the falls will extend their stays to patronize additional attractions.

While a full market analysis for Heritage Area visitation has not yet been performed, there are a number of potential indicators that point toward strong market preferences for similar cultural attractions. Among these indicators is annual visitation at the National Historic Sites and Monuments that recognize and celebrate
African-American heritage (see Table 2). Total annual attendance has increased over the past decade at those with moderate visitation (less than 100,000 per year). In addition, two National Historic Sites specifically celebrating African-American heritage attract large annual audiences: in 2010 alone, the African-American NHS in Boston and the Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS in Atlanta had 333,000 and 658,000 visitors, respectively (NPS 2011c).

Aside from these specific sites, a second indicator is the spending habits of cultural heritage tourists. Major travel expense categories which may benefit from cultural heritage tourism development include accommodation expenses, food and drink, personal transportation expenses, organized tours, admissions and fees, and souvenir spending. One examination of the American cultural heritage tourism market estimated its size at approximately 118.3 million adults nationwide, and indicated that this affluent market stays longer and spends more than their non-cultural tourist counterparts (McCormick 2010). The spending habits of these travelers will play a large role in the economic benefit of the Heritage Area with respect to both the goods and services purchased during their travels and the tax benefits generated through those purchases. Local revenue sources which can benefit from increased visitor spending include a county room tax (which directly funds the tourism marketing efforts of the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation), rental car taxes, and retail sales taxes.
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

Public Participation

The Commission’s approach in developing the Heritage Area Management Plan was to capture the full account of the Underground Railroad by weaving into it the story of the local support network, their regional partners in the Abolitionist movement, and the City’s prominent location. The public participation process employed in the creation of the Heritage Area Management Plan reflected that story. It connected local residents with community leaders in developing a product worthy of the City’s significance as an international attraction and gateway.

Residents, business and community leaders, and local organizations were engaged at the outset and throughout the development of this Management Plan. Their participation played a significant role in shaping the direction of the Underground Railroad Heritage Area, while also strengthening their understanding and appreciation of their community’s heritage. The process was intended in part to sow the seeds of civic commitment to the preservation of heritage resources, which will be critically important if the Heritage Area is to remain a valuable community resource well into the future. It provided a forum for valuable dialogue between the Commission and community members, contributed to building important relationships between interested parties, and led to a richer experience for all involved in the development of the Heritage Area Management Plan.

The purpose of public participation in the development of the Plan was twofold: to collect local knowledge regarding community resources and experiences relative to the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movements, and to inform the community of the progress associated with the creation of the Heritage Area. The public participation process served to highlight local ideas and opportunities that were subsequently woven into the strategic steps for managing specific sites within the Heritage Area as well as the Heritage Area as a whole. This process of engaging with the public was intended to serve as a foundation for the future of the Heritage Area; as the Heritage Area evolves, it is expected that its administrators will continue to engage with residents and other stakeholders to ensure that it remains vibrant and successful.

Methods

Effective public participation processes must accommodate various learning styles, communication preferences, and levels of engagement. Therefore, the Commission utilized a number of channels for community outreach and participation, including stakeholder interviews, public information meetings, community workshops, a project website, and periodic email “blasts”.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 3: Stakeholder Interviews</th>
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<td>Local/Regional Historians</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitality Business Owners</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Business Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYSOPRHP Niagara Region staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara University/Educators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

Stakeholder interviews

Six stakeholder interviews were conducted to obtain information and knowledge from small groups of community members with the same general interest or background. Each group represented a different segment of the community. Interviews followed a basic outline, yet were intentionally informal, flexible, and conversational so as to garner the information most relevant to the participants. Invitees included:

- Regional and local representatives, including officials from the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara County, USA Niagara Development Corp., and NYSOPRHP;
- Representatives of the regional tourism industry, including NTCC/Niagara USA and tourism business owners;
- Regional and local historians, including City historians, university faculty, and independent researchers;
- Religious leaders and non-governmental organizations;
- Neighborhood advocates and representatives; and
- Educators and students.

Stakeholder interviews were conducted during the early stages of the plan’s development, and continued as necessary when additional information was needed from particular stakeholder groups. The small group settings allowed the project team to collect input regarding participants’ knowledge of local cultural resources, the local economy and opportunities for growth, and their ideas on how and why the Heritage Area could be relevant and useful, both personally and professionally. Table 3 highlights the schedule of stakeholder interviews as they were conducted.

Public informational meetings

The purpose of public informational meetings was to provide the community with periodic updates on the Commission’s progress in developing the Heritage Area and management plan. However, these meetings went beyond the one-way transmission of information; they also served as a public forum for dialogue related to community issues, the planning process, and the Heritage Area itself. The Commission and the project team used these meetings to engage with individual attendees, provide organized updates on the findings of historic research, and encourage further personal and professional involvement from interested parties.

The first public informational meeting was conducted at the Niagara Falls Public Library on August 24, 2011, and was attended by approximately 100 members of the public, the Commission, elected officials, and members of the media. Attendees were greeted near the auditorium entrance with a series of informational boards describing the formation of the Heritage Area, key historic facts, figures, and locations, and the Heritage Area Management Plan development process. The meeting included presentations from two Commission members (Tom DeSantis and William Bradberry), Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster, project historian Dr. Judith Wellman, and edr’s project manager Jane Rice.

A second public informational meeting was conducted in the first quarter of 2012 to present the community the results and recommendations provided in the Heritage Area Management Plan.
Community workshops

Community workshops were used to further engage the public through interactive exercises aimed not only at educating participants, but also challenging them to interpret the meaning and importance of their local heritage. These workshops tapped into the community’s capacity for creative solutions in ways that other methods could not. Two such events were held in consecutive weeks, first at a community event organized by the Ministerial Council on September 30, and again at City Hall on October 6, 2011. Each of the two workshops followed the same format, including a short presentation followed by three exercises and informal discussion. The community workshop exercises are presented in further detail in Appendix B.

Anthony Cohen, director of the Menare Foundation, speaking at the first community workshop.

The first community workshop held at Mount Zion Baptist Church on September 30, 2011.
Three exercises were designed for the workshops, each with a specific purpose. The first activity was the “Visual Thesaurus”, a modified word association exercise. After a guided practice exercise, participants were given a central theme (“Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area”) and asked to link a series of objects or activities, behaviors or actions, and desires or interests to that theme. This exercise was used to stimulate participants’ thinking about how they might interact with the Heritage Area in general terms, and how it might address their particular interests.

The second activity, “Site Interpretation”, built on the Visual Thesaurus by introducing participants to a particular site within the City of Niagara Falls that played a documented role in the local Underground Railroad network. Site-specific exercises were designed for the site of the Cataract Hotel, the Ferry Landing, which was identified as a possible location of Dr. Skinner’s School for Deaf or Blind African American children, and the Suspension Bridge. Participants first saw the respective site as it currently exists, and were asked to identify objects/behaviors/interests related to that site, similar to their responses in the first exercise. After completing that portion, participants were educated about the history of the site and its association with the Underground Railroad. Given this information, they were asked what they would like to see, hear, and do at this site, and how (if at all) they would like it to be...
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

A COMPLETED “SITE INTERPRETATION” COMMUNITY WORKSHOP EXERCISE

WHAT THIS PLACE IS TO YOU NOW...

BUFFALO AVENUE, OLD MAIN STREET AND PROSPECT STREET INTERSECTION/ HERITAGE PARK

WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE THIS PLACE TO BE...

SITE OF THE CATARACT HOUSE

Typical response to the visual thesaurus segment of the “Site Interpretation” exercise.

Typical response to the inspiration and vision segment of the “Site Interpretation” exercise.
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

The Site Interpretation exercise concluded with an open-ended question (“What would you like this place to be?”) posed in the Visual Thesaurus format. The Site Interpretation exercise provided valuable insight into the ways in which the community would prefer to interact with both their heritage and surroundings.

The final activity was the “Tour Guide” exercise. In this exercise, each participant was presented with a scenario in which they were asked to design a local tour for a particular person or group. The unique needs and interests of hypothetical tourists (or group of tourists) were described in brief detail. They included a group of young schoolchildren, a family member with impaired mobility, a busload of foreign senior citizens, and an affluent pair of in-laws. Participants were tasked with accommodating the needs and interests of each group in coordinating site visits, meals, transportation, and other activities within a given period of time. This exercise implicitly required participants to prioritize the Heritage Area sites that would most appeal to a variety of important user groups. It also provided ideas regarding additional activities that may enhance the heritage tourism experience for future visitors.

Project website and email communication

No public participation process, no matter how well planned, can ever reach every resident or stakeholder. Busy schedules, prior commitments, and other conflicts suggest that effective communication should also include the establishment, maintenance, and regular updates of a digital communication tool. To that end, the project website, www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org, was established in July, 2011, as a way to provide further information on the Heritage Area and the development of the Heritage Area.
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Management Plan. This site includes pages on the history of the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls, the process of researching historical documents, Underground Railroad-related news and project events, project team members, and contact information. It also links to a Facebook page, “Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area”, designed to provide regular updates on activities and events within the Heritage Area and provide an opportunity for user comment and interaction.

Finally, periodic email “blasts” were sent out to notify interested parties of upcoming events related to the Heritage Area. The recipient list was compiled by event sign-in sheets, and supplemented by the identification of additional stakeholders as suggested by Commission and community members. These electronic communications were coordinated with notifications on both the project website and Facebook page.

- Outcomes

The public participation process was successful in achieving the visions set forth in each of the three goals. All methods of public participation were used in informing the community of the value of its cultural resources related to the Underground Railroad. This success was evident in the strong showing of community support at the first public informational meeting, public utilization of the electronic resources related to the Heritage Area, and the positive and substantial coverage of project events in local media outlets. Efforts to disseminate information related to the history of the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls resulted in a heightened level of community awareness and affirmative support from a number of important stakeholders and interest groups.

The Commission and project team garnered valuable and timely information from event participants at all project events. Stakeholder meetings produced useful, detailed discussions of particular social and economic concerns. The insight and opinions of participants in these small groups were corroborated among their peers and colleagues, and often led to further lines of inquiry. The public informational meetings were beneficial as a “one-stop-shop” of project information. The open question and answer periods during these meetings dissected a variety of issues that were important to the community in understanding the relevance of both the Underground Railroad and the Heritage Area to their contemporary lives. And the responses to community workshop exercises illustrated thoughtful, pragmatic, and creative problem-solving on behalf of those who participated. Each exercise and individual scenario generated helpful commentary among participants and the project team.

It is most important to consider the public participation process thus far as the foundation for continued engagement. As the Heritage Area continues to cultivate support among the community and interest among visitors, it must strive to connect with individual and organized stakeholders in meaningful ways. This will require structured and sustained attention toward educational initiatives, marketing and outreach campaigns, and collaborative efforts with partner organizations.
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

The City of Niagara Falls possesses an unparalleled density of historic resources, narratives, sites, experiences, and research opportunities related to the Underground Railroad. Historical research and community outreach conducted during preparation of this Plan resulted in the identification, documentation, and interpretation of numerous historic resources related the Underground Railroad located in the Heritage Area and surrounding region (see Maps 17 and 18). The results of these research and outreach efforts are fully described in the comprehensive report entitled Survey of Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Niagara Falls and Surround Area, 1820-1880 (hereinafter Historic Resources Survey), prepared by Dr. Judith Wellman of New York Historical Research Associates, Inc., which is included in Appendix C of this Plan. A brief summary of the results and resources described in the Historic Resources Survey report is included below.

Almost all Americans know something- or think they know something- about the Underground Railroad. In the minds of many, the Underground Railroad was a secret movement, shrouded in a romantic haze through which people dimly see kindly Quakers, tunnels, and quilts. New research in local communities, however, is reshaping historians’ understanding of how the Underground Railroad worked, who was involved, and how it changed over time. Recognizing that the Underground Railroad...
III. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NIAGARA FALLS

Map 17: Underground Railroad Sites within the Heritage Area
began with “the effort of enslaved African Americans to gain their freedom by escaping bondage” (NPS 2011a), current research has indeed documented the participation of Quakers (and other helpers), but so far has uncovered no evidence of tunnels or quilts.

As this body of research begins to lift that shroud of secrecy, it paints a new portrait in which many parts of the Underground Railroad were well documented. This new understanding of the Underground Railroad describes how freedom seekers themselves initiated this movement, with African Americans as well as European Americans (and, in fact, entire communities) playing exceptionally important roles as helpers and facilitators in Underground Railroad operations.

One of those communities was Niagara Falls. While people escaped from slavery through almost every border community, Niagara Falls was nationally important, acting like the small end of a funnel to channel people from all over the South across the Niagara River into Ontario. On the Niagara Frontier, other crossing points included Youngstown, Lewiston, and Black Rock. But, nationally, Niagara Falls rivaled Detroit as an international link for freedom seekers.

Freedom seekers came to Niagara Falls primarily because it offered relatively easy access to Canada. The ferry at the base of the American Falls brought both tourists and
freedom seekers alike to Canada in a short, if dramatic, fifteen-minute ride. After 1855, a system of rail lines (including the New York Central Railroad, the Erie Railroad, and the Great Western Railroad in Canada) converged on the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge, with fifty or more trains crossing the border each day in this newly-integrated railway system.

An emerging system of ferries and railroads alone would have attracted people escaping from slavery to Niagara Falls. But the presence of two groups of people made Niagara Falls more dramatic and an even stronger magnet for freedom seekers. First were large numbers of local and regional abolitionists who actively assisted people escaping from slavery. Most important locally were African American waiters who worked in the large hotels, especially the Cataract House and the International Hotel. Many of these waiters had themselves escaped from slavery. These waiters were a select group of well-organized skilled workers, and they provided critical assistance to freedom seekers on the very last leg of the journey. Abolitionist allies also included European Americans, such as William H. Child, the Whitney family (owners of the Cataract House) and second-generation members of the Porter family (the first major post-Seneca landholders in Niagara Falls).

A second group of people in Niagara Falls challenged the efforts of freedom seekers and their allies. These were white elite families from the South. Of the thousands of tourists who came to Niagara Falls every summer, about twenty percent were residents of the South. Often, these families brought their enslaved maids and valets with them. Close juxtaposition of southern slave-owners and black abolitionist hotel workers created an underlying social instability that threatened to disrupt the carefree holiday atmosphere of this tourist town. Freedom seekers, their proslavery opponents, and their abolitionist allies (both black and white) made Niagara Falls one of the country’s most important and dramatic crossing points from slavery into freedom.

Underground Railroad Sites in Niagara Falls

As described in Appendix C, Niagara Falls has some of the richest Underground Railroad documentation of any community in the United States. Memoirs and newspapers provide especially detailed information. In addition to general recollections about the Underground Railroad, we found 36 specific cases, often documented in great detail, of Underground Railroad incidents in Niagara County (most of them in Niagara Falls). These include stories of relatively unknown freedom seekers such as Thomas James, Isaac Williamson, and Charlotte Eglin, as well as details about nationally known African Americans, including Harriet Tubman, Samuel R. Ward, and Ann Maria Weems. As additional research is conducted on this topic, more stories will most likely be found.

The Historic Resources Survey report for the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area (see Appendix C) identifies 27 significant sites (or historic resources) throughout the community and surrounding areas that served important functions during the formation and operation of the Underground Railroad. These include 23 historic resources in the City of Niagara Falls (see Maps 17 and 18) and four more—a fraction of the total—for Niagara County. These 23 historic resources are summarized herein in the Inset entitled “Underground Railroad Sites in Niagara Falls.” A more detailed description for each resource, including an evaluation of significance and historical research that documents each site’s association with the Underground Railroad, is provided in Appendix C.
III. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NIAGARA FALLS

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES IN NIAGARA FALLS

Site of the Ferry Landing
(Foot of Niagara Falls, below Prospect Point)

Before the War of 1812, an 80-foot-long ladder was constructed directly at the base of the American falls. It was destroyed during the War of 1812. Three years later, at the request of Augustus Porter, Parkhurst Whitney built the first stairs at this location in 1818, echoing a similar staircase on the Canadian side. In 1820, Whitney started regular ferry service with small rowboats, to carry passengers across the river. Many African Americans escaped to freedom on the ferry. The dramatic escape of “Martha” and her husband, as they were chased down a steep staircase to the Ferry Landing by a would-be band of bounty hunters, is among the most notable. Accounts also exist to document Nancy Berry’s (much less dramatic) ferry ride, as well as Patrick Sneed’s unsuccessful attempt to cross the river at this location. John Morrison, head waiter at the Cataract House, often ferried people across the river himself (see Appendix C: pages 142-160).

Site of the Cataract House
(Main Street at the Niagara River)

The Cataract House was one of the two largest hotels in Niagara Falls, operated by Parkhurst Whitney from 1825-45, and by his son Solon Whitney and sons-in-law James Trott and Dexter Jerauld from 1845 until the late-nineteenth century. It was a magnet both for southern slave-holding tourists and for African American waiters, many of them southern-born. In 1850, more than sixty percent of African Americans working at the Cataract listed their birthplaces as a southern state or unknown/unlisted, suggesting that many of these people had escaped from slavery. The Cataract House was also the site of many escapes from slavery, and the staff of African American waiters (under head waiter John Morrison and others) helped enslaved people escape to freedom. Famous cases included a failed rescue attempt in 1847 and the successful escapes of Cecilia Jane Reynolds (1847), a woman named Martha (1853), and waiter Patrick Sneed (1853). The importance of the Cataract House as the center of Underground Railroad activism in Niagara Falls cannot be over-estimated. The African American waiters who worked as Underground Railroad agents made this site one of the most important Underground Railroad nodes in the entire nation (see Appendix C: pages 48-79).
The Eagle Hotel was the first hotel in Niagara Falls, owned by Parkhurst Whitney. In 1853, B.F. Childs added on to this building to create the world-renowned International Hotel, equal in size and stature to the Cataract House. Like the Cataract, this hotel employed many black waiters. Eagle/International Hotel staff (including Daniel R. Cosby, headwaiter from 1853 into the 1870s) were involved in rescue attempts, including a failed rescue of a young woman staying at the hotel in 1847 (see Appendix C: pages 79-84).

Between 1847 and 1854, the Falls Hotel housed the offices of The Iris, a newspaper with antislavery sympathies owned by editor George Hackstaff and printer William Tunis. Tunis also published tourist guides, operated a bookstore across the river in Ontario, and served as an agent for the Railway Express System, delivering New York City periodicals to inland cities. In 1860, African Americans lived in homes of both William Tunis and the proprietor of the Falls Hotel. The hotel burned in 1861 (see Appendix C: pages 117-118).
III. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NIAGARA FALLS

James S. Patterson (also known as Samuel J. Patterson) was born in 1809 in the Commonwealth of Virginia, a stronghold of southern slavery. Patterson came to Niagara Falls in 1836, and worked for years as a porter at the Cataract House. He would go on to take full advantage of his personal and financial liberties as a free African American in Niagara Falls when he and his wife became proprietors of the Free Soil Hotel in or around 1850. The Pattersons, also known to support local Underground Railroad activities, operated the Free Soil Hotel until the early 1860’s, when they leased it to other proprietors. James Patterson was remarkable, not only because he owned a hotel but also because he did not fear to advertise his political principles by naming it the Free Soil Hotel (see Appendix C: pages 84-86).

James and Luvisa Patterson, operators of the Free Soil Hotel on Main Street, lived in this house. After their daughter Mary Luvisa Patterson married Charles Kersey Jackson from Virginia, the Pattersons moved this house to a nearby back lot on Fall Street and built the Robinson House Hotel at this site on the original Mechanic Street. Charles and Mary Luvisa became proprietors of the Robinson House Hotel. By 1929, when the home was demolished, local resident Julius Krakoski remembered it as “the home of Jim Patterson, a slave who escaped from the South during the early years of the Civil War” (see Appendix C: pages 86-89).
At a time when many African Americans could not find adequate hotel accommodations, Christopher Smith, proprietor of the St. Lawrence Hotel, hosted Frederick Douglass here in 1848. Although Douglass had to eat at a separate table, he recommended the St. Lawrence Hotel to other abolitionists. The St. Lawrence Hotel was a smaller hotel than the flagship Cataract, Eagle, or Falls hotels. A map prepared by G.W. Johnson in 1849-50 clearly shows the St. Lawrence Hotel it on the west side of Main Street (No. 4 on map), identifying it as one of the four main hotels in Niagara Falls (see Appendix C: pages 96-99).

Dexter Jerauld, part owner of the Cataract House, constructed this elegant Gothic Revival structure sometime before 1867 and perhaps as early as the 1840s. In 1836, Dexter R. Jerauld married Angeline Whitney (1847-1857), daughter of Parkhurst and Celinda Whitney. Two African Americans, Margaret Truss and Sarah Brown, lived in the Jerauld household in 1860. As part owner of the Cataract House, Dexter Ray Jerauld hired dozens of African Americans, most as waiters and cooks in the hotel, many of whom had escaped from slavery. Living only one block from the Cataract House, he interacted daily with staff and clientele. He was certainly aware of Underground Railroad activities associated with the Cataract House (see Appendix C: pages 128-133).
Augustus S. Porter and his brother Peter B. Porter were the first private European American owners of land in Niagara Falls. As part of Porter, Barton, and Company, they established ports in Niagara Falls, Lewiston, and Black Rock (now part of Buffalo). Augustus Porter built a house in Niagara Falls in 1808. After the British burned it in 1813, he rebuilt it on the same site in 1818. Before he moved to Niagara Falls, Augustus Porter owned at least one person in slavery in Canandaigua, New York. He reputedly brought the first African American family to Niagara Falls, Harry and Kate Wood. In the 1820 census, the Wood family and the Abraham Thompson family, all free people of color, lived near the Porter family. The Porter family home was demolished in the 1920s. (see Appendix C: pages 42-44).

Solon Myron Napoleon Whitney, son of Parkhurst Whitney, owned the Cataract Hotel for more than 50 years with his brothers-in-law Dexter Jerauld and James Trott. All of them hired African Americans as waiters. Many of these waiters had born in the South and had likely escaped from slavery. The house is architecturally significant, associated with both the history of tourism and industrial development in Niagara Falls, and also is one of the few surviving structures in the City associated with the Underground Railroad (see Appendix C: pages 133-136).
III. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NIAGARA FALLS

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES IN NIAGARA FALLS

The Porters were one of the first European American families to own land within the Niagara Frontier, and would go on to become major land speculators throughout the region. Elizabeth Porter and her brother Peter A. Porter became major benefactors for African Americans in Niagara Falls. In a dramatic incident in 1861, they helped a young woman named Cassey escape from slave-catchers. Although both his wives came from southern slaveholding families, Peter A. Porter served as colonel of the Eighth Heavy Artillery during the Civil War, facing Confederate troops led by his cousin at Cold Harbor in 1864, where he lost his life (see Appendix C: pages 89-96).

Many prominent local families, both African American and European American, were associated with St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. Peter A. Porter and Elizabeth Porter, both associated with the Underground Railroad, belonged to this church, as did Parkhurst and Celinda Whitney, Solon and Frances Whitney, and Dexter and Angeline Whitney Jerauld. Several African Americans were also affiliated with this church, including Samuel Edwards and Charles Kersey Jackson. In 1864, St. Peter’s conducted a burial service in Oakwood Cemetery for Samuel Edwards, “a colored man” and hotel waiter who died of consumption on September 12, 1864, at the age of thirty-three. When abolitionist Elizabeth Porter died in 1876, she was buried in Oakwood Cemetery, with a service in St. Peter’s Church (see Appendix C: pages 139-142).
III. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NIAGARA FALLS

The Peter B. Porter family represents the tension between slavery and freedom embodied in personal family relationships. Both Peter B. Porter and his son Peter A. Porter married women from slaveholding families. In 1821, while he was still living at Black Rock (now part of the City of Buffalo) Peter B. Porter tried to recapture a woman who had escaped from his household; in 1837, he assisted his brother-in-law, David Castleman, in Castleman’s attempt to recapture Solomon Moseby. The Porter children (Elizabeth and Peter A. Porter), however, had antislavery sympathies and most likely helped on the Underground Railroad (see Appendix C: pages 44-48).

W.H. Childs was a major anchor of abolitionism in Niagara Falls, “a most zealous anti-slavery man,” from at least 1840 to the Civil War, working with philanthropist Gerrit Smith to distribute land to African Americans in 1846-47, consistently supporting the Liberty Party, and helping to establish the Congregational Church at Suspension Bridge. Childs was also actively involved in the Underground Railroad, and was involved in assisting at least two fugitives. He appears on Wilbur Siebert’s 1898 list of Underground Railroad agents (see Appendix C: pages 100-103).
Oakwood Cemetery has been the main cemetery for the village and city of Niagara Falls since it was established in 1852 on land donated by Lavinia Porter, daughter of Niagara Falls founder Augustus Porter. Oakwood includes graves from many families, both African American and European American, related to the story of slavery, freedom, and African American life in Niagara Falls. These include European Americans such as the Porter, Whitney, Childs, and Townsend families and African Americans such as the Pattersons, Jacksons, Hamiltons, and Lees. Edward and Mary Sarsnett are also buried in Oakwood. Edward Sarsnett was a grandson of John Sarsnett, brought in slavery from Maryland to Lyons, New York, in 1797. Edward was a Civil War veteran, and his wife Mary was active in the Grand Army of the Republic (see Appendix C: pages 118-121).

Emma Louise Jordan Tanner was born in Lundy’s Lane, Niagara Falls, Canada, about 1859. Her father, Samuel Jordan, had escaped from slavery in Virginia on the Underground Railroad to live in Lundy’s Lane, Ontario, Canada. By 1928, Emma Tanner moved to Niagara Falls, New York, and became a noted corset saleswoman in a local department store. Emma Tanner represents the social and economic success, as well as the close ties to family members in Canada, of many children of people who had escaped from slavery (see Appendix C: pages 121-125).
III. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NIAGARA FALLS

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES IN NIAGARA FALLS

Site of the Whitney-Trott House
(Main Street across from Chilton Avenue)

This site is significant for three reasons. It was the home of Parkhurst and Celinda Whitney, original owners of the Cataract House, which hired dozens of African Americans as waiters and cooks, many of whom had been enslaved in the South. It was also the home of their daughter Celinda Eliza Whitney, who married and James Fullerton Trott, who (along with his wife’s brother and brother-in-law) went on to own the Cataract House upon Parkhurst’s retirement. Upon his own retirement, James Fullerton Trott also went on to establish Niagara Falls’ public school system. The Whitney-Trott House was also the center of the largest commercial farm in the Town of Niagara (see Appendix C: pages 103-111).

Site of the International Suspension Bridge
(Whirlpool Street)

The Suspension Bridge across the Niagara Gorge served as a point of crossing for many fugitives into Canada. Built in 1848 as a carriage and footbridge, the Suspension Bridge was rebuilt in two levels to incorporate rail traffic in 1855. This bridge became a magnet for freedom seekers, a crossing point that funneled hundreds and perhaps thousands of people from slavery to freedom. After 1855, people took the railroad—principally the New York Central Railroad from New York City, Albany, Syracuse, and Rochester or the Canandaigua Railroad from Elmira—directly across the Suspension Bridge. Harriet Tubman was the most famous person to travel from slavery to freedom at the Suspension Bridge. Her crossings included one with Joe Bailey, who escaped from slavery with Tubman and three others in November 1856 (see Appendix C: pages 160-172).
III. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NIAGARA FALLS

Underground Railroad Sites in Niagara Falls

Site of the Maid of the Mist Landing
Dock at Niagara River, just south of Suspension Bridge

From 1846, when the Maid of the Mist began service, until after Captain Joel Robinson took her through the Whirlpool to be sold in 1861, she docked in Bellevue, just above the Suspension Bridge. In August 1853, U.S. marshals pursued Cataract Hotel waiter Patrick Sneed, accusing him not of escaping from slavery but of murder. Ferry boat rowers took Sneed almost to the Canada ferry landing before learning of his murder charge. At that point, they changed course and rowed Sneed to the Maid of the Mist landing near the Suspension Bridge. Aided by Irish workers, marshals captured Sneed at the landing and took him by rail and carriage to jail in Buffalo. His subsequent trial revealed the murder charge to be fraudulent and resulted in Sneed's release. (see Appendix C: pages 172-177).

First Congregational Church and Society of Niagara City
(822 Cleveland Avenue)

The First Congregational Church and Society of Niagara City was constructed in 1855-56, and located just a block away from the Suspension Bridge. Founding members struggled to decide between Congregational and Presbyterian incorporation; the former institution was noted for its abolitionist sympathies, while the latter often opposed abolitionism and allowed slaveholders as members. As the membership debated these ideals, efforts to unify the congregations failed, and the anti-abolitionist congregants left to form a separate church. Noted abolitionist members of the Congregational Church included William H. Childs and Minister Benjamin F. Bradford (see Appendix C: pages 136-139).
III. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NIAGARA FALLS

Leander Colt represents widespread local support for helping people to get out of slavery. Colt “and lady” attended a benefit concert for George Goines in Lockport, who was raising money to buy freedom for his mother and brother. After Colt constructed this limestone commercial block in 1855, he rented part of the building to George Hackstaff, editor of the Niagara Herald, who had antislavery sympathies (see Appendix C: pages 127-128).

From 1858-61, Dr. P.H. Skinner and his wife Jarusha Skinner kept a school here for African American children who were deaf, mute, or blind, espousing ideals of equality and abolitionism. The school published and printed The Mute and the Blind, an abolitionist newspaper. Students helped to run the printing press, and proceeds from the paper were used to support the school. The Skinner School for Colored Deaf, Dumb and Blind Children is one of the most remarkable institutions in the Heritage Area, unique in the U.S. for focusing on African American children—many of them born in Canada—who were deaf, dumb, or blind (see Appendix C: pages 111-117).
III. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN NIAGARA FALLS

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES IN NIAGARA FALLS

The Colt family represents widespread local sympathy for enslaved people. They were founding members of the Congregational Church in Suspension Bridge, which was sympathetic to abolitionism, and in 1855, Leander Colt “and lady” attended a benefit concert in Lockport to raise money to buy George Goines’ brother and mother out of slavery. The house is architecturally significant, and is one of the few surviving structures in the City associated with the abolitionism or the Underground Railroad (see Appendix C: pages 126-127).

![Colt House](1018 Ontario Avenue)

The Colt family represents widespread local sympathy for enslaved people. They were founding members of the Congregational Church in Suspension Bridge, which was sympathetic to abolitionism, and in 1855, Leander Colt “and lady” attended a benefit concert in Lockport to raise money to buy George Goines’ brother and mother out of slavery. The house is architecturally significant, and is one of the few surviving structures in the City associated with the abolitionism or the Underground Railroad (see Appendix C: pages 126-127).

- **Underground Railroad Sites in Niagara County, Outside the City of Niagara Falls**

  In addition to identifying the significant historic resources located within the Heritage Area, the Historic Resources Survey for the project identified numerous sites and stories associated with the Underground Railroad from the surrounding Niagara Frontier region (see Appendix C). Selected sites from outside Niagara Falls are listed below (see Map 19) and are more fully described in Appendix C. Continued research to identify, document, and evaluate historic resources located throughout the Study Area is a worthwhile ongoing objective for the Heritage Area Commission.

  **Ferry Landing, Youngstown, Town of Porter**

  The ferry across the Niagara River at Youngstown was an important crossing point for freedom seekers, particularly before completion of the Suspension Bridges at Niagara Falls in 1848 and Lewiston in 1851. It remained an alternative even when these other crossing points were patrolled by slave catchers. Thomas James crossed here in 1821 (see Appendix C: pages 177-181).

  **Ferry Landing and Suspension Bridge, Freedom Crossing Monument Lewiston**

  Many freedom seekers used the ferry at Lewiston or the Lewiston Suspension Bridge (from its construction in 1851 to its destruction in 1864) to cross into freedom in Ontario. Steamboats also stopped here six days a week, making a regular circuit of both U.S. and Canadian ports on Lake Ontario. U.S. captains such as Horatio Nelson Throop (master of the Rochester and the Ontario) and Canadian captains such as Hugh Richardson (master of the Chief Justice William Robinson) willingly picked up people escaping from slavery at the Lewiston landing and took them to Toronto and Kingston. Today, the area near the historic landing and suspension bridge is marked by a bronze, larger-than-life statue, designed by sculptor Susan Geissler and erected in 2009 to commemorate Margaret Goff Clark’s Freedom Crossing (1969) (see Appendix C: pages 181-192).

  **Hannah and John Johnston Home, Site of East of Elmwood Avenue, North of Sweeney Street (Former-Basenberg-Bush Farm), North Tonawanda**

  John Johnson, born in Washington, D.C., and Hannah Johnson, born in Albany, lived in North Tonawanda from about 1825 until John’s death sometime before 1870 and Hannah’s death in 1883. They owned about twelve acres of land near the home of John Chadwick. John Johnson may have escaped from slavery on the Underground Railroad and both John and Hannah may have used their home as a safe house for others. After Hannah Johnson’s death, her story lived on—and continues to live on—in local oral traditions as the tale of “Black Hannah” (see Appendix C: pages 192-197).
Lockport. Home and School (corner Vine and Garden Streets), Aaron Mossell

The Mossell family represents free people of color who migrated from Maryland along with people escaping from slavery. They went first to Canada and then returned after the Civil War to the U.S. They settled in Lockport, New York, where Aaron Mossell became a well-known brick maker, hotel owner, and community leader. The Mossell children and grandchildren became ministers, doctors, lawyers, hotel owners, and college professors. One of the Mossell family’s most important contributions to Lockport was their advocacy for access for African American students to the public schools. African Americans in Lockport met as early as 1835 to create a school for their children (see Appendix C: pages 197-204).
II. DEFINING THE HERITAGE AREA

The Underground Railroad occupies a central place in American history and folklore. The “railroad” refers to the routes followed by brave African American individuals who escaped from slavery during the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the people, networks, places and structures that collectively provided for and supported their efforts to gain their freedom. The places and stories associated with this network of freedom seekers, free African Americans, and abolitionists evoke powerful themes in American history and culture, including slavery, race, courage, idealism, spirituality, and morality, and celebrate the bravery and resolve of the men and women who risked their own lives, and often their families, to achieve the most basic rights of liberty and personhood.

Americans—whether students, tourists, or genealogists; African Americans or people of other ethnic backgrounds; young or old—are fascinated by the Underground Railroad. We are attracted, of course, by its inherent mystery. Yet the Underground Railroad is far more than a historical detective story. It speaks to essential American values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all people.

IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

MAJOR INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The historical research and community outreach for the planning initiative 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 include the following:

1. Crossing the Niagara

For the fugitive freedom seekers who passed through the Niagara Frontier, the physical act of crossing the Niagara Gorge represented the final act of courage and determination at the end of a long, arduous journey. The details of these journeys were as varied as the people who undertook them. However, the act of crossing the gorge, whether by ferry or bridge, represented for all of these seekers the final stage of their long struggle for solace and salvation. At the end of these journeys, the gorge served as both the gateway and final obstacle to achieving the goal of freedom from enslavement. The unique, dynamic setting—the furious roar of the falls and rapids, the rolling currents and waves, the narrow span of the Suspension Bridge above the wide, deep chasm of the gorge—elevates the drama and suspense of this moment. The sites along the gorge therefore provide a unique opportunity to interpret the intense emotional, physical, and spiritual achievement of the long journey of the Underground Railroad and final triumph of crossing into freedom.

2. Power, Struggle, and Freedom

The epic history of Niagara Falls embodies the struggle by competing interests groups for control and power over natural and human resources. This includes the tremendous power of the falls themselves, as well as the long history of the region as contested ground among those who sought to exploit that power. This exploitation has included not only harnessing the physical energy of the falls, but also the exploitation of residents and visitors by the individuals and institutions who were able to exert control over that energy. The Niagara Frontier was also 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. In this sense 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. The overt and subtle connections between these various narratives of power and struggle in Niagara Falls provide opportunities to engage with, explore, and interpret themes of control, resistance, and freedom in American history and culture.

3. The Past Is Always Present

The physical imprint of history on the urban landscape—the historic architecture, preserved open and public spaces, industrial features, network of streets, and the collective memory of the community—embodies the powerful relevance of the past to the contemporary experience of Niagara Falls. In Niagara Falls, this 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 (such as the waiters at the Cataract House and other hotels) who helped to shape the present form and character of the City. It also includes the persistent effort to harness and exploit the tremendous natural power of the falls, and all of the social consequences of that exploitation.

4. Destination: Niagara Falls

Niagara Falls is and has been as an important destination in the American and international consciousness, not only in the imaginations of temporary visitors such as tourists and travelers, but also for the permanent residents who have built and refashioned the City and its surroundings over the past 200 years. The various, and often contradictory, meanings ascribed to Niagara Falls as a destination is a critical aspect of understanding both the historical and contemporary importance of the falls. Niagara Falls played an important role in the history of the development of tourism as both an American and international pastime. In addition, the Niagara Frontier was the ultimate destination for many fugitive enslaved peoples and represented the end of their perilous journey to freedom. However, 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 contributions of these brave individuals and their descendants to the historical development and cultural fabric of Niagara Falls has been essential to the development and enduring appeal of this unique place.
Interpreting the Heritage Area

Program for Interpretation, Education, and Academic Research

A critical component of interpreting the Heritage Area is promoting awareness of the stories and sites associated with the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls. As described in Chapter III, the present-day City of Niagara Falls, formerly known as the Villages of Niagara and Suspension Bridge, played a critical role in the Underground Railroad. Niagara Falls was an established border crossing that was readily accessible via numerous transportation routes, including the Erie Canal. There was a well-established network of abolitionists and anti-slavery activists in western New York. By the mid-nineteenth century, Niagara Falls was already a renowned tourist destination. The many hotels provided employment for a significant portion of the villages’ large African American population, some of whom were free and many of whom were likely fugitives that had escaped from slavery. A primary goal of the Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission is to Rediscover and promote this important aspect of the city’s history for the benefit of both residents and visitors.

Underground Railroad Interpretive Center

The proposed Underground Railroad Interpretive Center at the Customs House (see Chapter I) will serve as a key interpretive site for the entire Heritage Area. An Interpretive Plan for the Customs House (Riggs Ward 2011) is being prepared concurrently with the preparation of the Heritage Area Management Plan. Accordingly, the content and design of Underground Railroad interpretive displays at the site have not been formally determined. However, the following general interpretive goals and recommendations have been proposed for the Interpretive Center (Riggs Ward 2011:25-27):

- Ensure that orientation to the site and other theme-related venues in the Niagara Frontier is effective and appropriate.
- Work with interpretive partners to encourage links between the Interpretive Center and other authentic Underground Railroad locations in the Niagara Frontier. Consider ways to build onto rather than compete with existing wayfinding and promotional materials. For example, since sign clutter already exists, consider using an existing sign system or identity that already directs visitors instead of creating another separate sign system.

The Customs House undergoing renovation.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

Ensure that all themes are addressed with the most effective interpretive techniques, given the chosen storylines. Use media appropriate to realistic projections of Interpretive Center’s likely audiences.

Given limited space and an expansive story, identify media that will allow access into additional levels of detail.

Ensure that each biography is inserted appropriately into the interpretive narrative. Introduce personal stories that illustrate the dreams and the risks involved in the journey, crossing, and resettlement.

Invite audiences to share in assessing the evidence used to support the narrative. Use interpretive approaches that help 21st century audiences decipher the evidence used to develop interpretive media.

Given the limited interior space in the Customs House, consider using the exterior spaces that might be adjacent to it for additional interpretive content. For example, design a system of “breadcrumbs” (in the form of interpretive signs or banners) to introduce the Underground Railroad story that lead the visitor both to and from the Interpretive Center.

Develop interpretive media—interpretive panels, programs, tours—that will encourage visitors to move outside the Customs House and explore the Customs House/Bridge site.

Provide an overlook that allows the Niagara Gorge itself to remind visitors of the challenge of crossing and that links existing accounts of crossing to an authentic location.

Engage audiences in the journey as well as the crossing. Provide maps that will help visualize the story and perhaps connect to visitor hometowns.

Design interpretation for educators and school groups that is flexible so that fluctuations in on- and off-site.

Given the international nature of the story and of visitor demographics at the Interpretive Center, take measures to explain context and avoid assumptions that might confuse international audiences. Similarly, provide additional explanation of Canadian history—a critical aspect of the crossing story—for non-Canadian visitors.

Since operational details of the Interpretive Center (i.e., supervision of daily activity, staffing, budget, etc.) have yet to be determined, the goal should be to design interpretive media that are both durable and maintenance free to the greatest extent possible.

Continued coordination with and support for the Interpretive Center by the Commission is an essential ongoing project for the success of the Heritage Area.

Marking/Memorializing Underground Railroad Sites

To capture public attention and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to better appreciate Underground Railroad history in Niagara Falls, the important sites within the Heritage Area will need to be marked or memorialized in some way. As described in the Section entitled “Visiting the Heritage Area”, some form of locational markers will be necessary to effectively orient visitors and direct attention to Underground Railroad sites.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

- **Signs.** Signage is one method of orienting visitors, and a common solution for interpretive exhibits at historic sites. For instance, free standing signs have been installed to create a “Freedom Trail” that marks the locations of Underground Railroad sites in the City of Syracuse, New York. However, as noted elsewhere in this report, the City of Niagara Falls already has an abundance of existing signage programs which in some locations clutter the landscape and may serve to overwhelm or confuse visitors. As described in the goals and recommendations for the Interpretive Center, in many locations finding ways to integrate with or build upon existing signage programs may be preferable to installing additional signage.

- **Sidewalk Markers.** Free-standing signs, plaques mounted on buildings, and other forms of vertical signage are effective methods of marking and informing visitors about the importance of heritage sites, but can also have the undesirable effect of adding visual clutter. An alternative approach is to install some form of markers directly on the ground surface, or otherwise at a more pedestrian scale such as plaques mounted on boulders or other low-standing monuments. The widespread availability of sidewalks and hardscape surfaces, particularly in downtown Niagara Falls, make the option of sidewalk markers particularly attractive for the Heritage Area. Examples of sidewalk signage or markers could include painted,
imprinted, or mosaic designs. These markers could feature the Heritage Area logo, or an element of the logo (e.g., the North Star) to mark and identify locations of Underground Railroad sites. These markers would function well as waypoints or stations along Underground Railroad Walking Tour routes within the City (see below).

- **Sculptures/Public Art Installations.** There are relatively few extant buildings or other readily recognizable structures within the Heritage Area that are associated with the Underground Railroad. Many of the significant sites, such as the various hotels and many of the houses associated with historical figures, are no longer standing. The lack of standing buildings associated with the Underground Railroad within the Heritage Area provides an opportunity for more creative approaches to site interpretation. Original sculptures, statues, and/or other public art installations would provide compelling forums for site interpretation as well as attract attention from passersby who otherwise may not be aware of or seeking out heritage-related experiences. It is worth noting that a number of other Underground Railroad interpretive sites have employed the motif of bronze figures enacting key narrative moments or vignettes. Examples
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

The size and style of the small boat moored on the shoreline at the former site of the Ferry Landing are based on nineteenth-century illustrations and paintings of the ferry. Its placement in the water is intended to attract the attention of visitors to the Maid of the Mist, as well as evoke the courage that would have been required to attempt a crossing below the Falls. This rendering illustrates the concept of a sculpture or public art installation that attracts visitor attention and illustrates important aspects of the Underground Railroad story in Niagara Falls.
of these types of sculptures include the Freedom Crossing Monument in Lewiston, NY, the Jerry Rescue in Syracuse, NY, the Battle Creek Underground Railroad Memorial in Battle Creek, MI, and the Detroit/Ontario Underground Railroad Memorial. The latter includes sculptures located in both Detroit, MI and Windsor, Ontario, which celebrate the important crossing point that linked (and continue to link) these two communities (Dwight 2011).

Heritage Area sites that are well suited for interpretive sculpture or art installations include the site of the Cataract House (at Heritage Park, owned by NYSOPRHP), the Ferry Landing at Prospect Point, and the site of the International Suspension Bridge, and the former site of the Maid of the Mist Landing (now part of Gorge View Park, owned by NYSOPRHP)

- **Murals.** Other forms of public art installation that have been used to engage communities and promote awareness of Underground Railroad heritage include murals. Examples of recent mural projects that reflect the interpretive themes for the Heritage Area include the Underground Railroad Vermont and the Fugitive Slave mural in South Royalton, VT, the Harriet Tubman Mural at the Kennett Underground Railroad Center in Kennett Square, PA, the Kentucky Raid mural at the Museum at Southwestern Michigan College, and an untitled Underground Railroad mural in Richmond, IN. Historical examples include
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

the ca. 1940 Underground Railroad mural study by James Michael Newell in the Dolgeville, NY Post Office. Commissioning an Underground Railroad heritage-themed mural or series of murals would accomplish multiple simultaneous benefits, including promoting awareness of the Heritage Area, improving aesthetics, positive re-use of vacant buildings and/or empty lots, and as community outreach/revitalization projects. Planning, design, and fabrication of murals could be an excellent way to engage with various community groups and/or local schools.

Underground Railroad Walking Tours

Walking tours would be highly effective tools for sharing the Heritage Area’s historically significant Underground Railroad sites and associated stories with the local community and visitors, alike. The experience of literally walking in the footsteps of the heroes and freedom seekers that personify the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls while learning their stories would enrich participant’s interpretation of this history.

Other walking tours currently offered in Niagara Falls include the Historic Walking Tour of Downtown Niagara Falls and the Historic Walking Tour of Niagara Reservation, both sponsored by the City of Niagara Falls. Brochures for these tours include location maps, photographs and brief descriptions of each identified site, presented on a tri-folded single sheet. Building on this format, a multi-page booklet designed with an emphasis on aesthetic presentation, utilizing branding and graphic elements developed during the preparation of this Heritage Area Management Plan, is recommended for the Underground Railroad Walking Tour. The publication would feature informative yet concise and intriguing narratives accompanied by quality graphics including mapping, current and historical photographs and other images. Hard copies of this publication could be made available at tourist information centers and at the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center, in addition to a digital version available through the Heritage Area website.

Examples of quality walking tour publications include:


In addition to the publication, the walking tour could also be presented in smartphone application software (“app”) format. The app would include all of the content from the publication with added potential to include interactive maps, video clips (i.e., video of historic reenactments) and audio files. Information regarding various sites could be “triggered” within the app when users reach the various sites within the Heritage Area, possibly even requiring standing upon a sidewalk marker (or similar), as described above. Other options to consider could include making the app available in various languages, creating a children’s version of the walking tour, and incorporating the walking tour into a Heritage Area Foursquare network (see “Marketing the Heritage Area”).

Community Programming: Heritage Festival(s)

Niagara University has historically hosted an annual Freedom Trail Festival that celebrates the importance of Underground
The centerpiece of the Freedom Trail Festival could be a street fair or parade on Main Street that ends at the Interpretive Center and site of the International Suspension Bridge, followed by an event that features performances, reenactments, games, and vendors. The festivities would deliver a welcome vibrancy to the neighborhood that hosts the centerpiece of Heritage Area attractions.
Railroad history in the City. While Heritage Area presence at any festival would help to enhance recognition and public knowledge of its sites and services, the Freedom Trail Festival in particular is an especially attractive opportunity for both parties. This event provides an ideal opportunity for collaboration between the Heritage Area and an established anchor institution, focused specifically on a topic that is at the very center of the Heritage Area’s mission. Likewise, the formation of the Heritage Area and the creation of the Interpretive Center provide event organizers with a new opportunity to build interest in their event.

The goal of an institutional partnership focused on the Freedom Trail Festival would be to promote and commemorate the importance of Underground Railroad history in a well-publicized, dynamic, celebratory, and family-friendly event that could become an enduring fixture on the annual calendar of public activities in Niagara Falls. The potential for heritage-themed festivals or events are demonstrated by the success of events like Juneteenth celebrations (see inset), which are becoming increasingly popular. Remaining and former sites of Underground Railroad could be featured in guided or self-guided walking tours and could share their history through speakers, interpretive signs and displayed artifacts such as historic photographs. Significant sites, such as the Suspension Bridge could host historic reenactments conveying the courage, anxiety, suspense, and exultation that would have been felt by fugitives at the end of their long, perilous journey to Canada, and freedom. This (or other) festival(s) would provide an opportunity to promote visitation to the permanent interpretive features of the Heritage Area, such as the Interpretive Center or other important sites, but would also provide an opportunity for intensive programming resulting in shared benefits for diverse participants collectively promoting the larger series of events. Opportunities for enhanced interpretive programming during festivals could include:

- A parade, music or entertainment events, vendors, guest speakers, and other performances.
- Costumed re-enactments at key sites or as featured events would provide for an engaging re-telling of the dramatic stories of bravery, pursuit, and exciting narrow escapes featured in local Underground Railroad stories. These reenactments would convey the spectrum of emotions experienced by fugitives and other participants in the Underground Railroad saga.
- Speakers or costumed interpreters could be stationed at key interpretive sites, or provide guided walking tours in selected areas.
- Temporary interpretive signage or markers at selected sites, installed for the duration of the Freedom Trail Festival events, which provide a narrative of the site’s history, along with appropriate imagery - photographs, historic maps, illustrations - or other compelling evidence related to the site’s Underground Railroad history.
- Opportunities for vendors selling refreshments, crafts, and/or memorabilia with Underground Railroad and/or Niagara Falls history-related themes.

Throughout this partnership with event organizers, Heritage Area administrators should market the festival to attract local, regional, and international visitors. Locally, significant outreach efforts should target schools, particularly 4th/5th grade students (and their families) who are learning about the Underground Railroad as part of their regular curriculum. A continued emphasis on the Underground Railroad will help to distinguish Freedom Trail Festival activities from other regional events, such as the large Juneteenth celebration hosted in the City of Buffalo (see Inset on following page), although some coordinated programming may be beneficial.

Some of the potential benefits and rationale supporting the potential partnership with Niagara University and the Freedom Trail Festival include the following:

- Festivals provide an opportunity to demonstrate tangible results. A good turn-out would result in increased awareness of Underground Railroad heritage and would have direct economic benefits.
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Festivals can foster community pride and serve as a venue for both local residents and visitors to reflect on the important themes of history, slavery, freedom, and hope embodied in Underground Railroad narratives.

Many of the original buildings that formerly marked Underground Railroad sites in Niagara Falls no longer exist. Heritage Area involvement in the Freedom Trail Festival would provide an opportunity to represent and memorialize important sites for the duration of the event without constructing or investing in permanent signage or other permanent interpretive exhibit materials.

School Curriculum

In fulfillment of the Commission’s goal to educate the community regarding Niagara Falls’ role in the Underground Railroad, Heritage Area educators should coordinate with teachers and school administrators throughout the region to develop resources for use in classrooms and on Heritage Area field trips. The narratives revealed throughout this research and those yet to be discovered should provide ample material for lessons and activities within elementary and intermediate Social Studies curricula, particularly regarding American and state history requirements.

Such a partnership should facilitate the creation of educational assets that are historically accurate, engaging, and compatible with existing educational standards. Of these three
characteristics, the first is perhaps the easiest; the narratives and primary sources presented herein, combined with the aptitude and commitment of local and regional educational community, provide a sound foundation for historic authenticity. While student engagement may prove a higher hurdle, incorporation of the following components may aid in the development of materials that are both appropriate and interesting to school-age children:

- **Technology**: Most new educational materials are developed to technological components. Whether designed for the web platform, a CD-ROM, or other electronic platforms, the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad educational materials should incorporate some form of technology, in both lesson delivery and student assignments. Many examples of educational technologies have been successfully applied to elementary and intermediate Social Studies, including but not limited to photo or video logs, student websites, and geocaching (Friedman & Heafner 2006; Heafner 2004; Lary 2004). While the incorporation of technology is important for engaging students, curriculum developers should also be aware of the local socioeconomic factors discussed in Chapter II, such as high rates of unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, and low levels of per capita personal income. These characteristics could indicate a lack of technological access in students’ home environments.

- **Interactivity**: Interactivity is frequently associated with innovations in educational technology, although the two concepts are not necessarily one and the same. Educational technology typically involves a degree of interactivity; for example, students can respond to each other’s blog posts, or develop user-generated maps of Heritage Area sites. But other interactions do not necessarily require the use of technology, including question-and-answer sessions with vignette characters or Heritage Area educators, or student scene-writing and role-playing exercises.

- **Teamwork**: Teamwork allows students to learn from their peers, as well as try new and different roles within dynamic group settings. The Underground Railroad is an ideal subject for incorporating teamwork, because it reflects the importance of cooperation with, and tolerance for, other members of the community (e.g. the cooperative network of hotel staff).

- **Multiple learning styles and/or types of intelligence**: Educational materials must accommodate different learning styles within the classroom. Lessons regarding the Underground Railroad are also ideal for incorporating various types of intelligence (e.g., naturalist, logical, existential, or spatial).

In addition to being engaging for students, Heritage Area educational materials must be user-friendly for teachers. In recent years, the educational landscape has shifted toward standard, statewide competencies and requirements. This shift requires teachers to seek or develop lesson plans and activities that align to existing standards, such as the New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies. Of the five Social Studies standards for elementary and intermediate curriculum, most Underground Railroad lesson plans and activities should align most directly within the following three:

- **Standard 1**- History of the United States and New York: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate an understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

- **Standard 3**- Geography: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate an understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which they live - local, national, and global - including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.

- **Standard 5**- Civics, Citizenship, and Government: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate an understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the United States and other nations; the United States Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation (NYSED 1996).
Educational materials regarding the Underground Railroad align with these standards for several reasons, some more obvious than others:

- The institution of slavery challenges some of the most central themes that underscore the development of the American identity (e.g., independence, tolerance, freedom, individualism, self-determination), while the existence of the Underground Railroad reaffirms others (e.g., cooperation, perseverance, survival, empathy). [Standard 1]

- There are many links between the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movements and parallel developments beyond the Civil War, such as American transcendentalism, women’s suffrage, and civil rights. These links can be demonstrated through specific leaders of each movement, or through changes in state and federal policy. [Standard 1]

- There were many routes taken by freedom seekers as they escaped the American South in search of freedom, each with its advantages or disadvantages, but none without peril. The far-reaching network of the international slave trade, the bifurcation of the so-called free and slave states, the particular situation of Niagara Falls at the Canadian border, and the long and convoluted journeys taken by freedom seekers provide opportunities to improve students’ understanding of global, continental, and local geography. [Standard 3]

- The juxtaposition of legalized slavery within a constitutional democracy also highlights the changing nature of citizenship within nineteenth-century American society, and the reflection of civic values in government policy (e.g. the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 vs. the Emancipation Proclamation). [Standard 5]

- The role of abolitionists throughout Niagara Falls and beyond, especially including those that played active roles in the Underground Railroad or engaged in other acts of civil disobedience, is an object lesson in the responsibilities of citizenship and avenues for civic participation, both within and outside of legitimate systems. [Standard 5]

Educational materials could include, but are not limited to, educators’ workshops, lesson plans and/or in-class activities, and field trip guides and/or activities. Heritage Area administrators and supporters throughout the community may find several creative ways to combine educational outreach with other Heritage Area activities, such as mural projects or walking tours. Other relevant examples of educational materials are available throughout the greater educational and historic site community, including but not limited to the following:

- The Greater Cincinnati Television Educational Foundation, in partnership with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and the University of Cincinnati, has developed a multimedia curriculum for middle-school students entitled “Safe Passage: The Underground Railroad in Southwestern Ohio”. The curriculum includes introductory materials, lessons, media guides, and lesson resources. The web portal for Safe Passage details the history of the Underground Railroad throughout the region, provides links to specific Underground Railroad sites and museum exhibits, and correlates the lesson activities to specific state education standards (Greater Cincinnati Television Educational Foundation 2012).

- The Fort Smith National Historic Site in Arkansas has developed a “multi-stage geocache” on the grounds of the fort. Visitors can use hand-held GPS devices or compasses to track down six hidden “caches”, each dealing with some aspect of Fort history. The six caches each lead to the next location along a high-tech scavenger hunt (NPS 2011e).

- National Park Service’s “Teaching with Historic Places” (TwHP) initiative seeks to “[use] properties listed in the National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places to enliven history, social studies, geography, civics, and other subjects” (NPS 2011f). The TwHP initiative provides teachers with complete lesson plans on a range of history-related topics, with an entire subsection specifically related to African American history and historical places.

- The National Register of Historic Places has published a history curriculum
“Explore Your National Parks: Historic Places”. The curriculum is comprised of six lesson plans, each using a historic site as a vehicle for educating students about various historical events and movements. The sites included in the six lessons include the San Antonio Missions National Historic Park, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, Gettysburg National Military Park, Edison National Historic Site, USS Arizona Memorial, and the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. Each lesson incorporates maps, readings, and photographs (NPS 2012).

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Research and Outreach

The historical research and community outreach conducted throughout the Heritage Area planning process documented the importance of Underground Railroad history in Niagara Falls. However, the work conducted to date has also revealed the richness of that history, and suggests that the many stories, sites, and themes related to the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls warrant additional research and further exploration. Topics relevant to the mission and interpretive themes for the Heritage Area that warrant significant additional research include:

- **Cataract House Registers.** A more detailed study of visitor registers for the Cataract House (focusing on the number of southern visitors, types of visitors whether business or tourism, and gender of visitors) would give a better picture of the context in which the Underground Railroad operated.

- **African American Hotel Workers.** Further research concerning waiters and other African American workers at the Cataract House and International Hotel over time would help build up an overall profile of this group as well as lead to individual biographies of key people.

- **African American Community in Niagara Falls.** Further study of African American families who appeared in two or more census records in Niagara Falls would help us understand the social infrastructure of the local African American community. Research conducted to date has identified approximately 25 such family names that fit this criteria.

- **Underground Railroad Incidents.** The research conducted for the Management Plan generated a list of specific Underground Railroad incidents and associated sources. Additional text from primary sources could be added to this list, as a basis for exhibits, tours, markers, and other interpretive materials.

- **Connections with Canada.** Further research is warranted to better define and illuminate the Heritage Area’s connections with Canada, particularly with settlements established by freedom seekers in communities such as St. Catherine’s.

In recognition of the tremendous potential for continued historical research and interpretation in Niagara Falls, the Commission should organize and support the following types of additional programming activities:

- **Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Historical Research Grant:** The Commission could endow and support a competitive research grant (or grants), to be awarded annually based on the qualifications of the researcher and the topical relevance of the research proposal. The grant(s) could be targeted based on educational status of the applicants (e.g., high-school students, undergraduates, graduate students, professionals) or
targeted each year for specific topic areas or themes (e.g., Crossing the Niagara Gorge to Freedom, Tourism in Nineteenth-Century Niagara Falls, the Fugitive Slave Act on the Niagara Frontier).

- **Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Research Symposium:** The Commission could fund, organize, and promote an annual academic conference, perhaps in conjunction with Niagara University and/or other partnering institutions. The conference would be dedicated to research and discussion of topics relevant to the mission and goals of the Commission and/or the interpretive themes identified at the beginning of this chapter.

- **Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Public Lecture Series:** The Commission could fund and promote a regular speaker series (perhaps four to six invited speakers per year). Speakers could include notable historians, authors, artists, musicians, film-makers heritage tourism professionals, and/or social activists who could speak to the goals and mission of the Commission and/or the interpretive themes identified at the beginning of this chapter. The Lecture Series could be hosted at a singular venue (e.g., the Interpretive Center, or the Public Library) for the sake of convenience and to provide for a sense of stability, or could move among different venues to promote awareness and attendance at various sites within the Heritage Area.

### Preserving the Heritage Area

As described in Chapter I, it is the mission of the Niagara Falls Heritage Area Commission to educate and inform the community of the rich local heritage associated with the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movement, and to conserve and enhance the historic, cultural, economic and architectural resources of Niagara Falls. Preserving and interpreting historic sites in general, and Underground Railroad heritage sites in particular, can be beneficial to the Heritage Area beyond just recognizing historic and cultural significance for its own sake. The cumulative effect of various urban renewal programs, transportation projects, and changing economic conditions within the City of Niagara Falls have removed much of the historic and cultural fabric of areas of the City heavily traveled by visitors. The historic character of downtown Niagara Falls has become obscured by the visitor destinations at the Falls area; it has also become visually and physically disjointed with recent transportation projects and losses of local businesses and business districts. The remaining historic resources, if properly preserved, rehabilitated, and interpreted, can provide a source of community pride and re-establish a sense of place that is presently missing along the main corridors of the City.

To fulfill its mission to preserve and enhance the heritage resources of Niagara Falls, the Commission will need to follow two general steps to ensure that these resources will be protected into the future. The first step is to identify and record significant historic resources, including buildings and structures. This historical research and documentation of existing sites has largely been completed as described in the Historic Resources Survey report prepared for the project (see Appendix C). The resources identified in that survey provide tangible connection to the Underground Railroad period in Niagara Falls. Although many of the actual historic buildings in Niagara Falls have been lost (leaving only sites), the historic sites and remaining resources provide the foundation for interpreting the City’s Underground Railroad heritage to the public. Their future preservation is critically important to the success of the Heritage Area.

The second step is to determine the most appropriate types of formal historic property designations for these properties. Planning for and incorporation of these resources in an appropriate manner will provide an essential foundation for visitation and interpretation of Niagara Falls’ unique Underground Railroad story.
Designation and Protection of Cultural Resources

Protection and preservation of cultural (historic and archeological) resources can be accomplished by following several strategies, all of which need to work together as a comprehensive approach for preservation and interpretation. The most familiar tools are historic designation through one or all of several federal, state and/or municipal programs. In the public sector federal/state historic designations and local designations offer a wide range of protections through public process and land use controls. Private sector protections for cultural resources may be achieved by outright ownership and/or protective easements attached to the deed.

**Federal and State Historic Site Designations**

The federal and state governments offer historic designations that provide protections and planning considerations for undertakings by federal or state agencies. Designations include the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), National Historic Landmark (NHL) program, and the New York State Register of Historic Places (NYSRHP). The NRHP is the primary federal program and was established in 1966 as part of the National Historic Preservation Act. The NRHP establishes the criteria and standards for assessing historic and cultural resources that are used in both federal and state programs (NPS 1990). Nominations are coordinated through the NYSOPRHP,
in its capacity as State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and once approved at the state level are submitted to the U.S. Department of the Interior for concurrence and listing on the NRHP. In New York State, properties listed in the NRHP are automatically listed in the state register, or NYSRHP. Benefits of being listed on the NRHP include:

- Consideration in planning for federal and state licensed and assisted projects as outlined in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR Part 800) and Section 14.09 of the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980.

- Eligibility for a 20% federal income tax credit, and additional 20% New York State income tax credit, for qualified expenditures (up to $5,000,000) related to the rehabilitation of income-producing historic structures. New York State also offers a 20% state income tax credit for qualified expenditures (up to $50,000) related to the rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential historic structures located in eligible census tracts.

- Eligibility for matching federal and state historic preservation grants for municipalities and not-for-profit owners.

NHL designation provides greater protection and recognition for exceptional historic properties. An NHL is a federally designated historic building, site, structure, object, or district that represents an outstanding aspect of American history and culture. Their level of significance is at the national level, as designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Nationally significant properties tell important stories that have meaning for all Americans, regardless of where they live.

Six possible criteria for NHL properties have been established by the NPS (CFR 1982), of which only one needs to be met to establish historic significance at the national level:

- Properties that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained.

- Properties that are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States.

- Properties that represent some great idea or ideal of the American people.

- Properties that embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for a study of a period, style, or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

- Properties that are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently
significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture

- Properties that have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts and ideas to a major degree.

Like with the NRHP, a property with a nationally significant association may qualify for NHL designation only if it also retains a high degree of historic integrity, i.e., the physical features that made up its historic character and appearance are intact. Historic integrity is the ability of a property to convey its historical associations or attributes. While the NHL and NRHP programs use the same seven aspects of integrity to evaluate properties (see above), NHLs must retain them to a higher degree than required for NRHP listing. If the resource has been more than modestly modified or deteriorated since its period of national significance, it may meet the NRHP threshold for integrity, but not the higher NHL standard.

The NHL program does provide review and consideration for properties with special conditions that might normally preclude their eligibility. Of importance to many properties within the Niagara Falls Heritage Area is the potential special consideration given to the site of a building or structure that is no longer standing.

Local Historic Site Designations

Local governments have several avenues to preserve historic resources within their community. Municipalities may protect historic properties and/or districts through the use of zoning ordinances, and may also enact site plan review laws either in conjunction with zoning laws or as separate enactments. (NYSL 2011b). Lastly, local governments may regulate historic properties by enacting a local landmark preservation law (NYSDOS 2011). In general, local preservation laws enforced through municipal codes allow for strong protection and regulation of locally-designated sites.

Municipal protection and preservation efforts are handled by the Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Niagara Falls, a free-standing commission established through the historic preservation law. The Historic Preservation Commission focuses on the protection of historic and cultural resources, and provides a public a forum through which the community may become involved in local preservation efforts. An added benefit with adopting a local preservation law is the potential to become a Certified Local Government (CLG) through NYSOPRHP; CLG programs offer planning and funding opportunities for historic

CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS HISTORIC LANDMARKS

The purpose of the Historic Preservation Law of the City of Niagara Falls is to:

- Protect and enhance the landmarks and historic districts that represent distinctive elements of Niagara Falls’ history, architectural and cultural heritage;
- Foster civic pride in the accomplishments of the past;
- Protect and enhance Niagara Falls’ attractiveness;
- Support and stimulate the city’s economy;
- Stabilize and improve property values;
- Ensure harmonious, orderly and efficient growth and development of the city, and;
- Promote the use of historic resources for education, pleasure and welfare of the citizens of the city and the state (CNFHPC 2011).

A property is eligible for designation as a City of Niagara Falls Historic Landmark if that property:

- Is associated with the life of an individual or a group of people or events significant in national, state, or local history.
- Embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural style, a period, or a method of construction.
- Represents the work of an acclaimed builder, architect, designer, or landscape architect.
- Represents a significant or distinguished entity, but whose physical components may lack individual or special distinction.
- Because of a unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood.

See: http://niagarafallshistoricpreservation.org/node/34
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

DESIGNATION AND PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The mission and goals of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission, in general, are primarily concerned with the identification, interpretation, and preservation of cultural resources. Although the preservation of natural resources falls somewhat outside of this mission per se, it is likely that in some instances, the objectives of natural resource protection initiatives could represent opportunities for effective partnering.

Available regulatory mechanisms for the protection and preservation of natural resources include:

- **Critical Environmental Area designation**: Local agencies can designate Critical Environmental Areas (CEA’s) for recognition by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Designation requires that any future development impacts on the site be identified and evaluated through the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).

- **Zoning ordinances**: The City of Niagara Falls can incorporate appropriate standards for the protection of natural resources throughout their zoning ordinances. These measures could take the form of an environmental overlay zone, buffering requirements, or environmental performance criteria.

- **Local laws**: The City of Niagara Falls can adopt local laws designating locally important natural resources if such laws are consistent with the recommendations of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

- **Site plan review**: Through the site plan review process, the City can work with applicants to mitigate impacts on locally important natural resources. As discussed below, site plan reviews can also incorporate locally-developed natural resources inventories to direct development away from sensitive areas.

Available non-regulatory mechanisms for the protection and preservation of natural resources include:

- **Fee simple acquisition**: The option usually exists for municipalities or other interested parties to protect natural resources through the purchase of critical properties.

- **Easement acquisition**: Alternatively, interested parties can often achieve natural resource protection goals without purchasing properties outright. Term or perpetual conservation easements and other deed restrictions may be available at substantially less cost than fee simple acquisition.

- **Natural resource inventories**: Though not regulatory in and of itself, a natural resource inventory is one tool that a community can use to identify and prioritize its critical natural resources. Such inventories can be used to simply communicate the importance of environmental features to prospective developers, or can be fully incorporated into the permit review process.

and cultural resources within the community. The Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission became a CLG in 2002.

The Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission will need to play a key role in the preservation of Underground Railroad site in the Heritage Area. In addition to designating landmarks and participating in local land use decision making, the Historic Preservation Commission can also pursue funding opportunities through the CLG program for additional historic resources survey work, NRHP nominations, and education related to historic preservation.

*Ownership options*  
The most effective means for protecting historic properties is outright ownership or property protection through deed restrictions. Public ownership (whether through the local, state, or federal government) may be an appropriate option for some properties within the Heritage Area. However, this is not always a reliable option in times of prolonged budgetary pressures, and state or federal ownership may sacrifice local control and oversight over individual properties. Given such restraints, ownership through non-public entities (such as non-profit or not-for-profit organizations) and public-private partnerships may be more attractive options.

Many historic preservation and community development organizations hold preservation
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

Easements on valuable historic properties or portions thereof (e.g., façade easements). Preservation easements are a form of voluntary deed restriction used to protect defined historic characteristics of structures or sites in perpetuity. When preservation easements are granted to qualified organizations, property owners may be eligible for state and federal tax credits. As opposed to outright public or non-profit ownership, the donation of preservation easements allows properties to remain on local tax rolls. Easement holders acquire ownership interest in historic properties according to the terms of each individual agreement, and may monitor or administer certain stewardship activities.

The most effective options for the protection of historic sites within the Heritage Area will likely combine a federal, state, and/or local historic designation with whatever type of ownership structure is most amenable to the involved parties, and will be devised in concert with community plans and outreach initiatives. Coordination between these various levels of historic protection will produce resilient, responsive, and sustainable preservation strategies.

Historic Preservation Recommendations

The aforementioned public and private preservation programs are key initial steps to creating awareness and protections for the identified Underground Railroad sites within the Heritage Area. Several properties within the Heritage Area, such as the Dexter Jerauld House, Solon Whitney House and the Customs House, retain strong historic integrity and are good representations of the former character of Niagara Falls. The Customs House, currently being restored, will provide an anchor at northern end to the Heritage Area. The site of the Ferry landing at the base of the American Falls and the Suspension Bridge abutments near the Customs House retain exceptional qualities of feeling and association for the potential visitor. Both sites provide an ideal venue to interpret the dramatic and inspirational moment of crossing the Niagara Gorge to freedom in Canada.

A summary of recommendations for appropriate for each of the sites identified in Chapter III and described in Appendix C is provided in the following pages. All but seven of these sites have no extant historic structures. In the City of Niagara Falls, three periods of building demolition—in the mid-1880s (to make room for the Reservation in 1885), in the 1920s and 1930s (accompanying industrial development), and in the 1960s and 1970s (as part of urban renewal)—left few historic buildings standing. Note that although there is no documented historical association for the Customs House with the Underground Railroad, the Customs House is included in this summary because of its role as the proposed Interpretive Center for the Heritage Area.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: Although there are no buildings or structures related to the nineteenth century Ferry Landing, and the historic composition of this area has been greatly changed, the site retains strong integrity of location, feeling, and association due to its setting within the Niagara Gorge and location adjacent to the Falls.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare nominations for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission, the National Register of Historic Places, and the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sculpture/Public Art Installation, Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

The site of the Ferry Landing is among the best known tourist destinations in the world and is a key location for Underground Railroad heritage interpretation. A high quality, highly visible interpretive marker or art installation at this location would attract a global audience. The dramatic scene presented by the river and waterfall provide a unique opportunity to experience the anticipation and fear that would have been experienced by freedom seekers at the final stage of their journey to Canada.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The Cataract House, one of the largest and best known hotels in Niagara Falls during the nineteenth century, burned in 1945. Part of the site is located in Heritage Park (owned by New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation), which includes a gazebo and various plaques and memorials. In the surrounding area, the historic city street patterns and relationship to the river has been eradicated by late-twentieth century removals, commercial construction, and highway construction. The site does not retain historic integrity.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sculpture/Public Art Installation, Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

The former site of the Cataract Hotel is a key location for Underground Railroad heritage interpretation. The location of this site relative to the Niagara Reservation, Falls, and other nearby attractions warrants a high quality, highly visible interpretive marker or art installation that will attract a global audience and pique their interest in local Underground Railroad heritage.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

**Site of the Eagle/International Hotel**
(Southwest corner of Falls and Main Streets; present Comfort Inn)

**EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION:** The Eagle Hotel was built by 1815 and in 1852 significantly expanded to become the International Hotel, which was equal in size and stature to the Cataract Hotel. The International Hotel burned in 1918. The site is presently occupied by the Comfort Inn. The historic city street patterns and relationship to the river has been eradicated in this area by late-twentieth century removals, commercial construction, and highway construction. The site does not retain historic integrity.

**PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS:** Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.

**INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:** Mural, Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

Use of a mural, interpretive signage, or other visual aids at this site can communicate the original appearance and context of the site as part of downtown Niagara Falls in during the Underground Railroad period.

**Site of the Falls Hotel**
(Falls Street)

**EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION:** The Falls Hotel burned in 1861. The historic city street patterns in this area have been eradicated by twentieth-century removals, commercial construction, and highway construction. The site does not retain historic integrity.

**PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS:** Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.

**INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:** Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

This site can be interpreted together with the other hotel sites in the vicinity through effective, distinctive and recognizable interpretive signage display (or similar).
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The Free Soil Hotel, which was later the site of the Falls Hotel (shown on the 1875 Niagara County Atlas), was owned and operated by James S. [a.k.a, Samuel] Patterson during the 1850s and 1860s. The historic city street patterns and relationship to the river has been eradicated in this area by late-twentieth century removals, commercial construction, and highway construction. The site does not retain historic integrity.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission.

There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour, Mural.

This site can be interpreted together with the other hotel sites in the vicinity through effective, distinctive and recognizable interpretive signage (or other type of display). This hotel site is noteworthy because it was owned by an African American, and the name of the hotel – the Free Soil Hotel – demonstrates that the owner’s public commitment to his political principles.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The home of James and Luvisa Patterson was built in the 1860s, removed to an adjacent lot in 1892, and demolished in 1929. The historic city street patterns and relationship to the river has been eradicated in this area by late-twentieth century removals, commercial construction, and highway construction. The site does not retain historic integrity.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission.

There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

Use of interpretive signage and/or visuals at the site can communicate the original appearance and context of the site as part of downtown Niagara Falls during the Underground Railroad period.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The St. Lawrence Hotel was a small hotel that operated during the 1840s and 1850s and was later replaced by the E.M. Clark Furniture Store. The historic city street patterns and relationship to the river has been eradicated in this area by late-twentieth century removals, commercial construction, and highway construction. The site does not retain historic integrity.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

This site can be interpreted together with the other hotel sites in the vicinity through effective, distinctive and recognizable interpretive signage display (or similar).

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The Dexter Jerauld House may have been built as early as the 1840s. Despite extensive twentieth-century additions, the site retains its core historic building and relationship to the street intersection. The large rambling stone masonry Gothic Revival style house remains in place with modern one-story commercial structures attached facing Buffalo Avenue and First Street. Behind the modern additions, the majority of the Jerauld house remains remarkably intact from the mid-nineteenth century construction period.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare nominations for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission and listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

This house is a surviving architecturally significant structure (despite later commercial additions) associated with the associated with the Cataract House during the Underground Railroad period located in the immediate vicinity of the Falls.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES

Site of the Augustus Porter House
(Buffalo Avenue at the entrance to Goat Island)

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The Augustus Porter home was demolished in the 1920s. A New York State Education Department historic site marker commemorates the former site of the house, which is overgrown and has not been redeveloped. The historic city street patterns and relationship to the river have been greatly changed in this area by late-twentieth century removals, commercial construction, and highway construction. However; the site is diagonally across the intersection from the Jerauld House and does help anchor the surviving street pattern and historic character of this intersection. Overall, the site does not retain historic integrity.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

Solon Whitney Home
(335 Buffalo Avenue)

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The ca. 1849 Solon Whitney home is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The stone masonry Greek Revival style house with portico has been rehabilitated for commercial office use. Although much of the neighborhood has been changed in the twentieth century, the Whitney Home retains strong historic integrity to its original design when the Whitney’s lived there.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Site is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

This house is a surviving architecturally significant structure associated with the Cataract House during the Underground Railroad period located in the immediate vicinity of the Falls.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The Peter A. Porter home was built in the 1850s, occupied by the University Club after 1900, and demolished in 1935. The site is presently occupied by the Fallside Hotel. The historic city street patterns and relationship to the river has been eradicated in this area by late-twentieth century removals, commercial construction, and highway construction. The site does not retain historic integrity.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

Use of interpretive signage and/or visuals at the site can communicate the original appearance and context of the site as part of downtown Niagara Falls during the Underground Railroad period.

St. Peter's Episcopal Church

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: St. Peter's Episcopal Church was built between 1873 and 1880. Many African Americans in Niagara Falls were affiliated with this church, as were abolitionists Peter A. Porter and Elizabeth Porter. The church retains strong architectural and historic integrity, despite the loss of integrity of setting due to extensive twentieth century removals of adjacent buildings.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: The structure is already designated a Historic Landmark by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

This church is a surviving architecturally significant structure associated with the abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls. It is located near the Falls and hotel sites in downtown Niagara Falls.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES

Site of the Peter Buell Porter House
(Falls Street, south side, just east of Main Street)

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The Peter Buell Porter home on Falls Street later became a hotel called the Prospect Park House before being demolished. The historic city street patterns and relationship to the river has been eradicated in this area by late-twentieth century, removals, commercial construction, and highway construction. The site does not retain historic integrity.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.
Use of interpretive signage and/or visuals at the site can communicate the original appearance and context of the site as part of downtown Niagara Falls during the Underground Railroad period.

Site of the Home of William H. Childs
(615 Main Street, originally Ontario Street; present site of United States Post Office)

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The site was formerly occupied by the W.H. Childs home, which was replaced by the U.S. Post Office between 1904 and 1907. The Post Office is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As pertaining to the Underground Railroad period, the site does not retain historic integrity.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission (the site is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places).

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.
Site is located en route along Main Street between the cluster of sites located near the Falls and the cluster of sites located near the Suspension Bridge site. This important site has good potential for interpretive displays with the architecturally significant Post Office serving as a backdrop.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: Founded in 1852, Oakwood Cemetery includes the burial sites of many notable figures from the Niagara Falls during the Civil War-era. The site retains strong historical integrity. The solemn and reflective nineteenth-century character of the cemetery provides a strong contrast to the developed commercial areas of the city.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare nominations for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission and listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

Although the cemetery is not located near the concentrations of sites near the Falls and Suspension Bridge site, the size, integrity, and character of the site are strong enough to attract visitors without relying on other nearby heritage sites. Underground Railroad interpretive materials should build on the existing interpretive programming conducted at the site.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The Emma Tanner home is an existing frame house, which may have been built during the 1860s. This small worker cottage remains amongst other cottages of similar design and character. It has been altered in the twentieth century but is still recognizable as one of the row of worker houses. It with its neighbors on the street retains general representative historic character to its nineteenth century history.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission (the site is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places with the Chilton Avenue-Orchard Parkway Historic District).

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

This house is a surviving structure associated with the Underground Railroad. The general character of the historic streetscape in this area remains intact.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES

| Site of the Whitney-Trott House  
(Main Street across from Chilton Avenue) |
|----------------------------------------|
| **EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION:** The Whitney-Trott home was built in 1861 and demolished in 1949. The historic residential character of this intersection and neighborhood were greatly altered during the twentieth century with commercial construction and removals. The large site at the intersection is vacant and does not retain historic integrity.  
**PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS:** Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. There may be potential for archaeological remains associated with the site to be present.  
**INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:** Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.  
Use of interpretive signage and/or visuals at the site can communicate the original appearance and context of the site as part of downtown Niagara Falls in the nineteenth century. |

| U.S. Customs House, future site of the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center  
(2245 Whirlpool Street) |
|-------------------------|
| **EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION:** The U.S. Customs House, an imposing limestone masonry structure built in 1863, has been recently renovated to house the proposed Underground Railroad Interpretive Center.  
**PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Customs House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.  
**INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:** Interpretive Center, Walking Tour.  
Although this building does not have any direct historical association with the Underground Railroad, due to its role as the Interpretive Center this site will serve as a key site for Underground Railroad heritage interpretation and serve as an anchor for tours, sites, and economic development in the northern part of the Heritage Area. |
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The International Suspension Bridge was originally built in 1848 and rebuilt between 1851 and 1855. The site is presently occupied by the Whirlpool Bridge. The only remaining features of the nineteenth-century bridge are stone abutments and foundations that are flanked and partially incorporated within the modern railroad bridge supports and vehicular entrance to the NEXUS toll gates. While the feeling and association with the bridge and crossing are still strong at this location; the site as a whole does not retain historic integrity. The surviving bridge foundations, however, may be construed as retaining historic integrity to their original construction and location.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare nominations for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission, the National Register of Historic Places, and the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sculpture/Public Art Installation, Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

Due to its association with Harriet Tubman, role in numerous escape narratives, and proximity to the proposed Interpretive Center at the Customs House, the site of the International Suspension Bridge, and association with the capture of Patrick Sneed in 1853, this site is a key location for Underground Railroad heritage interpretation. The site warrants a high quality, highly visible interpretive marker or art installation. Site interpretation should coordinate with the ongoing renovation of Gorge View Park by New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: Between 1846 and 1861, the original Maid of the Mist operated from a dock located just above (south of) the Suspension Bridge at the base of the Niagara Gorge. The site is part of (or adjacent to) the property currently being renovation of Gorge View Park by New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare nominations for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission, the National Register of Historic Places, and the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sculpture/Public Art Installation, Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

Due to its proximity to the proposed Interpretive Center at the Customs House, the site of the International Suspension Bridge, and association with Harriet Tubman, role in numerous escape narratives, and proximity to the proposed Interpretive Center at the Customs House, the site of the International Suspension Bridge, and association with the capture of Patrick Sneed in 1853, this site is a key location for Underground Railroad heritage interpretation. The site warrants a high quality, highly visible interpretive marker or art installation. Site interpretation should coordinate with the ongoing renovation of Gorge View Park by New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.
**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES**

**First Congregational Church and Society of Niagara City**  
(822 Cleveland Avenue)

**EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION:** The First Congregational Church and Society of Niagara City was constructed in 1855-56, and located just a block away from the Suspension Bridge. Despite some twentieth-century alterations, the limestone masonry church retains a high level of architectural integrity and historic integrity associated with the Underground Railroad period.

**PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS:** Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission.

**INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:** Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.  
This church is a surviving architecturally significant structure associated with the abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls. The site could be key component of a walking tour originating at the Interpretive Center (Customs House) and International Suspension Bridge site.

**Colt Block**  
(Northeast corner of Main and Ontario Streets)

**EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION:** The Colt Block is a three-story, limestone, Italianate building built in 1855 that serves as an anchor for the historic commercial character of the north end of Main Street. The building retains strong historic and architectural integrity.

**PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS:** Prepare nominations for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission and listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

**INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:** Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.  
This imposing commercial building is a surviving architecturally significant structure associated with individuals with abolitionist sympathies in Niagara Falls. The site could be key component of a walking tour originating at the Interpretive Center (Customs House) and International Suspension Bridge site.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: Historical evidence (see Appendix C: pages 113-188) suggests that this school may have been located immediately south of the Colt Block. The school building was demolished and replaced during the late-nineteenth century by the brick commercial building brick commercial building (pictured at left) that currently occupies the site. The site does not retain historic integrity associated with the Underground Railroad period.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for Historic Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour, Mural.

The site could be a key component of a walking tour originating at the Interpretive Center (Customs House) and International Suspension Bridge site. The story of the School for Deaf and Blind African American Children is dramatic, inspiring, and has tremendous interpretive potential.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY EVALUATION: The Colt House is a limestone Greek Revival house built in 1855. The Niagara Falls City Council approved designation of the structures as a Historic Landmark in May 2006.

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS: Prepare a nomination for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (the structure is already designated a Historic Landmark by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission).

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS: Sign or Sidewalk Marker, Walking Tour.

This house is a surviving architecturally significant structure associated with an abolitionist family in Niagara Falls.
Recommendations for City of Niagara Falls Historic Landmarks

Of the Underground Railroad sites listed above, only two (the Colt House and St. Peter’s Episcopal Church) are designated local Historic Landmarks. The Commission should undertake the preparation of Historic Landmark Applications for all of the remaining sites (identified above) associated with the Underground Railroad within the Heritage Area for local Landmark designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission. Landmark designation by the Historic Preservation Commission will provide for the most direct consideration and best protection of these sites during future local planning and development-related decision making.

Recommendations for Listing on National Register of Historic Places

A recurring recommendation for many of the Underground Railroad sites in the Heritage Area is nomination for listing on the NRHP. These sites share a thematic association with the Underground Railroad and are geographically dispersed throughout the Heritage Area, and are therefore appropriate for nomination via a NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form. The Multiple Property Documentation Form is a cover document that provides the shared historic context statement and thematic associations for a related group of historic properties, and is intended to streamline and facilitate the nomination process. The NRHP nomination for these sites should draw upon the existing context and thematic statements defined in the National Park Service’s UGRR Resources in the U.S. Theme Study (NPS 1998). In addition, the necessary research and development of an Underground Railroad context for Niagara Falls has already been completed and is included in Appendix C. Following the submission and approval of a Multiple Property Documentation Form to NYSHOPRHP and the NRHP, then individual sites within the Heritage Area could be nominated for consideration as part of the multiple property listing.

The following sites should be considered for listing on the NRHP, and would be appropriate for consideration as a multiple property listing:

- Prospect Point (already listed on the NRHP as part of the Niagara Reservation),
- the foundations/abutments of the Suspension Bridge,
- the site of the original dock (built in 1846) for the Maid of the Mist,
- the Solon and Frances Whitney House (already individually listed on the NRHP for its architectural merits),
- the Emma Tanner House (part of the Chilton Avenue-Orchard Parkway Historic District, also already NRHP-listed),
- Oakwood Cemetery,
- the Dexter and Angeline Jerauld House,
- the Colt House, and
- the Colt Block.

The Colt House is listed as a local landmark in Niagara Falls, but neither the Jerauld House or the Colt Block are on any known official list of historic structures. All four of these (Oakwood Cemetery, the Colt House, the Colt Block, and the Jerauld House) are both historically and architecturally significant. Three of the Underground Railroad sites listed above have no standing structures, but still appear to satisfy NRHP-eligibility criteria. The first is the site at Prospect Point of the staircase and cable railway leading to the ferry landing at the base of the American falls. As part of the Niagara Reservation, this is owned by the State of New York and listed on the National Register. The remaining original fabric of the 1855 Suspension Bridge foundation and the site of the original dock (built in 1846) for the Maid of the Mist might also be considered for National Register listing under Criterion D (sites that have “yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory”).

In addition, the Customs House – although not historically associated with the Underground Railroad – is already listed on the NRHP. The U.S. Post Office is also already listed on the National Register, and stands on the site of the home of William Childs, a major Niagara Falls abolitionist.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

Underground Railroad Network to Freedom

In 1990, Public Law 101-628 directed the National Park Service (hereafter, NPS) to undertake a study of alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the Underground Railroad (NPS 1995). The results of this study set the stage for the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-203), which outlined the framework for the ongoing NPS Network to Freedom Program, which aims to honor important people and places associated with the Underground Railroad (NPS 2011a). The principal goals of the program are to:

1. Educate the public;
2. Provide technical assistance for documenting, preserving, and interpreting Underground Railroad history;
3. Create a network of historic sites, interpretive and educational programs, and research facilities with a verifiable connection to the Underground Railroad; and,
4. Design a unique logo to identify sites, programs, and facilities accepted in the Network.

Additionally, an essential goal of the Network to Freedom Program is consultation with local researchers and community advocates. This includes the recognition that representing the full significance of the Underground Railroad requires respect for and reliance on local knowledge.

The Network to Freedom Program provides a mechanism for sites associated with the Underground Railroad to submit an application for formal recognition by the Program. The NPS has prepared guidance and standards for documenting historic resources and verifying association with the Underground Railroad to assist in this application process. The Network to Freedom Program recognizes the importance of respecting oral traditions and community memory, but also requires additional documentation to substantiate traditions or beliefs about a given site’s association with the Underground Railroad. In keeping with standard historical research practice, multiple sources of information are required to validate the significance of local sites (NPS 2011a).

Within the Niagara region, there is currently one site and three programs formally recognized by Network to Freedom (NPS 2011a). These include:

- **Broderick Park** in Buffalo was the former location of the Black Rock Ferry across the Niagara River, which was an important crossing for fugitives into Canada.
- **Murphy Orchards**, formerly the McClew family farmstead during the nineteenth century – who local folklore holds were “station masters” on the Underground Railroad, is located in the Town of Burt in

To find out more about the Network to Freedom Program, please visit the National Park Service website: http://www.nps.gov/subjects/ugrr/index.htm.
Niagara County. Interpretive programming at Murphy Orchards includes guided tours, presentations, educational programs, and public displays.

- The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Underground Railroad Program provides additional support and assistance from the NPS for Network to Freedom sites located within the National Heritage Corridor.

- The Underground Railroad Heritage Trail, a program of the NYSOPRHP, was established to preserve, promote and celebrate New York’s rich Underground Railroad and anti-slavery heritage (see below).

Other possible Network to Freedom nominations include:

- Ferry Landing, Prospect Point, documented site;
- Suspension Bridge, documented site;
- Site of Maid of the Mist landing, documented site;
- Site of Steamboat Landing and bridge, Lewiston, documented site;
- Site of Ferry Landing, Youngstown, documented site;
- Niagara Falls Public Library, research center;
- Niagara County Historian’s Office, Lockport, research center;
- Niagara County History Center, Lockport, research center.

The Commission should undertake or fund the preparation of nominations to this program for selected sites, beginning with the Ferry Landing and the Suspension Bridge, if owners agree. Diane Miller, National Coordinator of the Network to Freedom, visited Niagara Falls in October 2011 and suggested that these two sites would be priorities.

- **New York State Underground Railroad Heritage Trail**

Heritage New York is a program of the NYSOPRHP that was established to create a system of Heritage Trails based on significant statewide historical themes (NYSOPRHP 2007). The Underground Railroad Heritage Trail is a network of designated historic sites, museums, and interpretive centers related to the Underground Railroad, slavery, abolitionism, and anti-slavery themes in New York State (NYSOPRHP 2011a). The program developed an exhibit entitled “Journey to the North: New York’s Freedom Trail” that is available for loan to museums and educational institutions.

There are currently three sites within the Niagara Region that are included in the Underground Railroad Heritage Trail. These include:

- The Castellani Art Museum, located on the Niagara University campus in Lewiston, is an Underground Railroad Heritage Trail Regional Interpretive Center. The museum includes a permanent exhibit entitled “Freedom Crossing: The Underground Railroad in Greater Niagara”, which utilizes various media and artifacts to educate visitors about the important people and places which comprised the Underground Railroad in the Niagara Region.

- Murphy Orchards (see previous section).

- The Michigan Street Baptist Church, located at 511 Michigan Avenue in Buffalo, was a station on the Underground Railroad and important meeting place for local abolitionists. The ca. 1845 church is also noteworthy for being the oldest structure in western New York built for and continuously occupied by an African-American community.

To find out more about the New York State Underground Railroad Heritage Trail, please visit the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation website: http://nysparks.state.ny.us/historic-preservation/heritage-trails/underground-railroad/default.aspx.
Historical Archeology: Niagara Falls and the Underground Railroad

Archaeological excavations in Niagara Falls have for the most part been conducted within the context of environmental impacts review of various construction projects since the 1970s. Many of these investigations have been conducted as part of regulatory compliance for projects reviewed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and/or Section 14.09 of the New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law. The locations of these excavations, and technical reports describing their results, are documented in various local municipal repositories as well as the NYSOPRHP in Waterford, New York. These archaeological studies have for the most part not addressed specific research topics (such as the Underground Railroad), but instead were focused on specific locations where various construction projects have been proposed.

A notable excavation was undertaken during the mid-1990s on behalf of the New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) in advance of the Rainbow Bridge Renovation Project (Wurst 1997, 2011). The archaeological project included historical research and excavation of features associated with the Niagara House, one of the early “fine hotels” in Niagara Falls that was originally built in the 1850s and operated until at least 1900. The excavations included two “privy” features (also referred to as “water closets”, or outhouses) that were filled with artifacts associated with the hotel. The privy features both yielded rich assemblages of artifacts (ceramic dishes, glass bottles, faunal [animal bone] remains, fruit seeds, and various personal objects). The artifacts were deposited in two episodes, one around 1856 and the other around 1870. The artifacts from the earlier (1856) assemblage appear to be related to hotel operations and guests, while the artifacts from the later assemblage appear to be related to the hotel workers (waiters, domestics, cooks, bar tenders, porters, stewards, and bakers) – many of whom lived at the hotel, and all of whom would have relied on the “necessary” services provided at their work place. The comparison of these artifacts assemblages revealed significant distinctions in the materials goods, food items, and leisure activities between hotel guests and hotel and workers. Of greater significance, the excavation and interpretation of these artifacts draws attention to the hotel workers, who are often “invisible” or overlooked in historical depictions of these hotels, as well as the social relations that accompanied the development of the tourism industry in Niagara Falls (Wurst 2011). Although the racial identity of the hotel workers was not emphasized in this study, the interpretations are directly relevant to better understanding the working conditions and social relations of African-American waiters and other hotel workers who were directly involved in the Underground Railroad.

On a national scale, archaeological studies of African-American history have predominantly focused on excavations of plantation sites in the southeastern United States and Caribbean. However, the scope and breadth of historical archaeological investigations of African-American life have expanded to include direct inquiries into topics such as race and racism, resistance at maroon sites and other communities, ethnic and gender identity issues, spirituality and religion, consumption and consumer preferences, and the Underground Railroad (Leone et al. 2005). It is reasonable to assume that archaeological studies of the Underground Railroad would be concerned with tunnels, secret chambers, and hidden passages, although these types of direct physical manifestations are relatively rare and it is often difficult to prove a direct connection with the Underground Railroad (Wellman 2002). Notable recent examples of such studies include the documentation and conservation of clay faces in a tunnel under the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Syracuse, New York (Armstrong and Wurst 2003) and the excavation of a cistern that may have been modified to hide fugitive slaves adjacent to the home of Thaddeus Stevens and Linda Hamilton Smith in Lancaster, Pennsylvania (Delle and Levine 2004). Another recent archeological study looks at the Underground Railroad more broadly by investigating the locations and networks connecting free black communities and associated African-American churches along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

[LaRoche 2004; Leone et al. 2005]. Collectively, these studies indicate the tremendous potential for historical archaeologists to contribute to our understanding the role that the Underground Railroad played in transforming the nation.

The rich archaeological assemblage and interpretations that resulted from the Niagara House excavations at Rainbow Bridge Plaza (Wurst 1997, 2011), as well as the compelling archaeological research concerning the Underground Railroad and African-American history in other areas of the country, suggests that there is tremendous potential for significant historical-archaeological sites and research projects in Niagara Falls. Several of the Underground Railroad sites in the Heritage Area merit exploratory archeological work to see whether they would be eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion D. These include sites of the Cataract House, International Hotel, Free Soil House/Robinson Hotel/Patterson House, Augustus Porter House, Peter A./Elizabeth/Josephine Porter House, and Whitney-Trott House. In addition, there are likely numerous other sites with significant archeological resources associated with African-American history in Niagara Falls.

### Visiting the Heritage Area

Due to the dispersed nature of Underground Railroad sites within the Heritage area, transportation options are critically important to both the visibility of each site and the success of the Heritage Area as a whole. Fortunately, Heritage Area visitors have a range of transportation options for accessing and moving through the area. From air travel to sidewalks, and all sizes of roadway in between, visitors should be able to find their way to important heritage sites and move from one to the other with relative ease. Wherever they may be limited, it is very important that the Heritage Area work in partnership with multiple transportation stakeholders (public transportation officials and users, tour operators, and private transit providers) to improve networking options and ensure better accessibility for Heritage Area visitors.

#### Existing Transportation and Circulation Systems

The Heritage Area is served by a diverse mix of transportation options, from pedestrian trails to an international airport (see Map 20). The City of Niagara Falls contains nearly 230 miles of municipally-owned roadways, 23 miles of state-owned roadways, and a portion of Interstate I-190. Among the heaviest-traveled roadways (those carrying an annual average of greater than 18,000 vehicles per day) are I-190, US Route 62, the LaSalle Expressway, and the combined length of State Route 384/John B. Daly Boulevard/Robert Moses Parkway (southern segment) (NYSDOT 2011b). The northern segment of the Robert Moses Parkway, though not heavily traveled, is nonetheless a prominent feature of the local road network primarily due to its alignment along the Niagara River gorge. The NYSDOT has undertaken a scoring process to examine options for the future disposition of the northern segment of the Parkway. As noted in their 2004 Strategic Master Plan, the City of Niagara Falls has supported the option of full removal, which it views as an opportunity to capitalize on its natural and cultural resources (Urban Strategies 2004).

Of particular importance with regard to vehicular transportation in this bi-national region are the three international border crossings spanning the Niagara River: Rainbow Bridge, Whirlpool Rapids Bridge, and the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. Each supports a particular segment of international vehicular travel. Tourist traffic is accommodated via the Rainbow and Lewiston-Queenston Bridges, whereas the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge is restricted to noncommercial Nexus passholders. In 2010, more than 3.4 million vehicles crossed these bridges in both directions, with approximately 60,000 more crossings occurring en route to Canada than those en route to the United States (see Table 4).

Predictably, the busiest travel times for border crossings in 2010 occurred on summer
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

Map 20: Existing Transportation Networks within the Heritage Area

- Bus Route
- Bike Route
- Passenger Railroad
- Heritage Area Boundary

Ontario, Canada
New York, United States

Transportation - Heritage Area

Map 20: Existing Transportation Networks within the Heritage Area
weekends from early July through early September. Pedestrian traffic followed an identical seasonal pattern at Rainbow Bridge, the only crossing that permits access on foot, and amounted to more than 447,000 crossings in 2010. Of the total Canada-bound vehicular traffic last year, approximately 90% of vehicles were passenger cars. The remaining 10% were mostly commercial truck traffic, with approximately 15,000 Canada-bound busses accounting for less than 0.5% of the vehicular crossings. International commercial truck travel is concentrated at the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge, due to travel restrictions at Rainbow and Whirlpool Bridges Rapids (Niagara Falls Bridge Commission 2011).

Niagara Falls’ transit network is operated by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA). NFTA’s Metro service features two transportation centers in Niagara Falls, at Factory Outlet Boulevard and Portage Road. These hubs service bus and paratransit transportation. The study area is serviced by six NFTA bus routes. These routes provide mostly east-west access within Niagara Falls, as well as access to and from neighboring communities including Lewiston, Lockport, Grand Island, North Tonawanda, and Buffalo (Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority 2011). In addition, the area is serviced by a number of regional tour bus operators, as well as a shuttle service operated by NYSOPRHP.

NFTA also operates the Niagara Falls International Airport, located at the confluence of Williams Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard/US Route 62. The airport’s three runways service commercial, military, and freight aviation. International passenger service is provided through DirectAir and Spirit Airlines. Train service is provided through Amtrak, which features access along its Empire Service and Maple Leaf routes to New York City and Toronto, respectively (Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority 2011).

The City of Niagara Falls also contains a number of walking/hiking and bicycling trails. The western terminus of New York State Bicycle Route 5 is located at the Rainbow Bridge approach along Main Street. This on-road cycling route follows US Route 62 to the Niagara Falls International Airport, where a southern spur connects to Buffalo. The main route, which is more than 350 miles long, continues via State Routes 429 and 31 toward Lockport,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Lewiston-Queenston</th>
<th>Rainbow</th>
<th>Whirlpool Rapids</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>102,063</td>
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<td>FEB</td>
<td>104,998</td>
<td>95,803</td>
<td>76,619</td>
<td>200,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAR</td>
<td>142,195</td>
<td>127,144</td>
<td>104,602</td>
<td>299,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APR</td>
<td>142,727</td>
<td>129,020</td>
<td>114,432</td>
<td>281,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY</td>
<td>157,601</td>
<td>136,300</td>
<td>126,651</td>
<td>309,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUN</td>
<td>151,131</td>
<td>138,618</td>
<td>128,048</td>
<td>307,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUL</td>
<td>185,126</td>
<td>161,589</td>
<td>172,632</td>
<td>429,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>196,643</td>
<td>167,308</td>
<td>177,492</td>
<td>441,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP</td>
<td>158,205</td>
<td>139,657</td>
<td>134,130</td>
<td>322,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT</td>
<td>157,858</td>
<td>131,768</td>
<td>131,486</td>
<td>320,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV</td>
<td>156,146</td>
<td>139,925</td>
<td>118,903</td>
<td>314,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>147,782</td>
<td>127,214</td>
<td>113,746</td>
<td>288,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Total</td>
<td>1,812,881</td>
<td>1,596,409</td>
<td>1,479,164</td>
<td>3,467,941</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Niagara River Bridge Crossings (2010)
eventually reaching the Massachusetts border in Columbia County (NYSDOT 2011c). Many casual walking/hiking opportunities exist within and around the nearby state parks. The most notable of these is the Niagara Gorge Trail, which provides access into and along the Niagara River.

**High-Visitation Areas**

Because of the density of Underground Railroad sites located between Rainbow Boulevard and the Niagara River shoreline (see Maps 17 and 18), it is likely that many visitors will combine their Heritage Area tourism activities with visits to Niagara Falls State Park. As the most popular tourist destination within the region, attendance at Niagara Falls State Park has increased in recent years, in contrast to that of Devil’s Hole and Whirlpool State Parks and Old Fort Niagara (see Tables 5 and 6). The high volume of foot traffic in and around this area is advantageous for the Heritage Area, as it will allow for visitors to appreciate historic markers, Underground Railroad art installations, or other pedestrian-scale locational markers that may be located at or near the park.

Niagara Falls State Park contains two Heritage Area sites within its boundaries (the sites of the historic ferry and Maid of the Mist landings), and at one time contained a portion of the Cataract House. From the park, it is a short distance to several others, including: the Solon Whitney House, Dexter R. Jerauld House, St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, First Presbyterian Church, and the sites of the Peter A. Porter House, Augustus B. Porter House, Peter B. Porter House, Cataract House, and W.H. Childs House.

In addition, it is also expected that the Interpretive Center will serve as a “hub” of Heritage Area visitation, thus accommodating a large proportion of overall Heritage Area vehicular and pedestrian traffic. As with the southernmost Heritage Area sites and their proximity to Niagara Falls State Park, the Interpretive Center and the northernmost sites are positioned to take advantage of the forthcoming rail station, which should develop into a reliable source of visitor traffic. The Interpretive Center will have a natural advantage to draw visitors from the station into the adjacent rehabilitated Customs House, serving as the Heritage Area visitor center and educating travelers about the many heritage tourism opportunities that exist nearby. It is expected that the rail station investment will provide a catalyst for additional neighborhood investment, which may bring additional awareness to the Heritage Area sites within this portion of the City, which include the Colt

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Table 5: Niagara Falls State Park: General Admission park entries, 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>VISITORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3,700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3,900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NYSOPRHP, 2011e.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

House and Colt Block, First Congregational Church and Society of Niagara City, the site of the Suspension Bridge, and the suspected location of Dr. Skinner’s School for Deaf or Blind African American Children.

Encouraging and Accommodating Visitation to the Heritage Area

Prior to marketing the Heritage Area to Niagara Falls-area residents and travelers, programming must be in place to ensure these potential patrons can easily identify and access the Heritage Area and its individual sites through routing, wayfinding and signage, and transportation options. Such a program is inextricably linked to the Heritage Area’s marketing efforts, but is more focused on the physical details of bringing visitors to and through the area. The process of encouraging and accommodating visitors will be driven by a number of primary factors:

Transportation

Economic Research Associates’ 2004 Market Analysis for Tourist Attractions in Niagara Falls (NY) defines the Niagara region as a “primarily drive-in market”, despite other infrastructural assets that could also be utilized (ERA 2004).

This finding has been subsequently echoed by a more recent marketing study, which finds that most visitors to Niagara Falls arrive via personal transportation (Longwoods International 2010). However, the area also draws a large number of motorcoach tourists, and efforts are currently underway to attract more air travel through the Niagara Falls International Airport.

Traveler profile

“Heritage travelers” tend to be slightly older, travel more frequently (and more often for business purposes), and spend more money while taking in cultural or heritage activities (McCormick 2010) (see “Marketing the Heritage Area” in this chapter). At the same time, many families visit Niagara Falls each year, and the region contains many family-oriented activities (ERA 2004).

Economic and social changes

Short- and long-term trends in exchange rates and the larger global economy have a substantial impact on visitation to international gateways such as Niagara Falls. So too does the domestic economy, as gas prices fluctuate while unemployment remains high. At the same time, there have been a number of social changes that could influence travel and transportation choices, such as an increase in environmental consciousness.

Table 6: Devil’s Hole, Whirlpool, and Old Fort Niagara State Parks: Total visitation, 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Devil’s Hole</th>
<th>Whirlpool</th>
<th>Old Fort Niagara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NYSOPRHP, 2011e.
Design
Residents and travelers in the Niagara Falls area are inundated with marketing messages for tourist attractions: road signs, billboards, posters and flyers, sandwich boards, airplane banners, etc. Any methods for directing visitors toward Heritage Area sites will be competing in a saturated visual environment. See the “Wayfinding” inset for additional discussion of design concerns.

The combination of these factors presents a context wherein the program for encouragement and accommodation of visitors should be directed mostly toward those traveling by personal vehicles, but must also consider alternative modes such as bicycles or motorcoaches. The program must respect the needs of a slightly older audience of typical heritage travelers, but should also catch the attention of families with children. And in general, it must direct potential visitors to Heritage Area sites in a manner that does not simply add to visual clutter.

Routing
Routing encompasses two parallel concerns: getting to the area, and getting through the area. The encouragement and accommodation of visitors from outside of the City must first consider the former. The primary travel routes for out-of-town domestic travelers coming to the City of Niagara Falls will likely continue to be the federal interstate (I-190), which carries an annual average of approximately 57,000 vehicles per day (AADT) across the terminus of the Grand Island Bridge (NYSDOT 2011d). While many utilize exit 21A for the southern segment of the Robert Moses Parkway, Buffalo Avenue, or the LaSalle Expressway, most do not; the majority of travelers entering Niagara Falls from the south continue (northwest) on I-190. Traffic volumes on I-190 decrease at that point, but remain high through to the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. From I-190, travelers can access the Heritage Area by heading east along the southern segment of the Robert Moses Parkway, Buffalo Avenue, Niagara Falls Boulevard/Route 62, or by taking Porter Road toward Ontario Avenue.

While individual travelers may have a preference for one of these routes over the others (Niagara Falls Boulevard is the most heavily used, at nearly 27,000 AADT), any coordinated efforts toward routing potential Heritage Area visitors should take into account parallel efforts toward the development of other destinations or districts. For example, the City’s comprehensive plan outlines proposals for improvements in the Buffalo Avenue precinct, using John B Daly Boulevard and the southern segment of the Robert Moses Parkway as primary gateways; likewise, efforts have been made to brand Pine Avenue as Niagara Falls’ “Little Italy”. In addition, the potential removal of the northern segment of the Robert Moses Parkway may generate subsequent attractions along the Niagara River gorge and rim. Routing efforts for these complementary heritage and revitalization efforts can and should take advantage of one another. The City and its many tourist-industry stakeholders have a vested interest in routing visitors through attractive areas, where public and private spaces are well-maintained. As investments (such as streetscape improvements along preferred routes) take both time and resources to implement, they should be coordinated among these parallel efforts to the greatest extent possible.

Wayfinding and Signage
As with most designated districts or other attractions, the Underground Railroad Heritage Area will require some wayfinding elements to direct visitors toward and within its boundaries. Wayfinding is a term that encompasses the many methods used to communicate the organization of the surrounding environment (see inset). Signage, including both the directional and interpretive varieties, is one of these methods. Signage can employ a number of media, such as roadway signs, banners, placards, or other markers at various points of entry or throughout the community.

In general, clear and conspicuous signs are an effective way to aid visitors’ sense of orientation to their surroundings. However, the design, location, and erection of signs may be a more substantial challenge for the Underground...
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

WAYFINDING: USING CREATIVE VISUAL CUES TO ORGANIZE THE ENVIRONMENT

Kevin Lynch coined the phrase “wayfinding” in The Image of the City, his seminal book about urban design, in 1960. “Way-finding,” he wrote, “is the original function of the environmental image, and the basis on which its emotional associations may have been founded. But the image is valuable not only in this immediate sense in which it acts as a map for the direction of movement; in a broader sense it can serve as a general frame of reference within which the individual can act, or to which he can attach his knowledge.” Lynch concluded that in this sense, “it is an organizer of facts and possibilities” (Lynch, 1960: p. 125).

In current practice, wayfinding is often understood to mean signage alone, but that simplification ignores the underlying elements that foster the intuitive understanding of places and direction (Muhlhausen, 2006). Throughout the City of Niagara Falls, signage has been installed for a wide variety of attractions, districts, and events, in addition to the vast amount of directional signage associated with roadways and transportation. These signs are often repetitive, inconsistent, and outdated; what’s worse, they have been known to remain posted after the intended destination has gone out of business. Signage in Niagara Falls tends toward cluttering, rather than clarifying, the visual environment.

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area will be challenged to orient visitors and potential visitors within this saturated visual environment. Necessary signage should be creative in approach and design, but it should not be the only medium used to convey the message that visitors receive. A concerted programming effort should take advantage of other environmental cues that may be employed in helping visitors orient themselves to the features and extent of the Heritage Area. These cues may include, but are not limited to: marked paths along the sidewalk; consistent, period architectural styles or streetscapes; lighting or projection installations; and innovative (possibly interactive) map kiosks. This concerted effort is an ideal opportunity to build relationships with important partners throughout the community, including but not limited to the Niagara Arts & Cultural Center, NYSDOT, and the City of Niagara Falls.

Railroad Heritage Area than for similar developments elsewhere in the state because of the large volume of signs that already exist throughout the area. As per Section 43.19 of the Heritage Area’s enabling legislation, the Commission will work with state agencies and public corporations, including but not limited to the NYSDOT, to review signage guidelines as appropriate.

From a design perspective, the Commission and project team have made progress on a branding effort, beginning with the project logo and website. These designs could be the foundation for the signage portion of the wayfinding program, or the issue could be revisited once programming for the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center has advanced further. Regardless, the design should be simple: forms and letters should be legible from a reasonable distance, they should attract the eyes of passersby, and exhibit a degree of consistency between media (e.g. road signs should have similarities to placards, etc.).

Heritage Area wayfinding elements should take advantage of landforms and the surrounding built environment wherever possible. Where Heritage Area sites have considerable vertical visibility (i.e. if they can be seen above neighboring structures), that visibility is an asset that can be advantageous for enhancing visitor orientation. However, whereas a strictly commercial operation might be inclined to take advantage of that visibility with a billboard, the Heritage Area should take a more creative
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

approach. A good example might be found in the Urban Video Project, which projects words, images, or videos onto large structures after dark (UVP 2011). Lacking visibility from a distance, they could employ directional art installations or simple markings to indicate paths to or near the site, such as those employed at Boston’s Freedom Trail, or the “arterie” art installation outside of the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse (see inset).

Transportation Options

Since the majority of visitors are travelling to Niagara Falls via personal vehicles, Heritage Area sites (and high-visitaton sites, in particular) must address the attendant issues of parking and access. The local zoning ordinance regulates parking requirements, in terms of the minimum size and number of off-street spaces. The space requirements depend on where a particular site is located (downtown, urban, suburban), and how it is used (commercial, institutional, residential). Bus/motorcoach access brings another level of both consideration and opportunity. Sites with higher visitation should consider providing motorcoach parking on site or coordinate with other facilities

Table 7: Projected Interpretive Center staffing budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>Annual Salaries</th>
<th>Full-time Positions</th>
<th>Part-Time Positions</th>
<th>Part-Time Type</th>
<th>Total Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator/Program Leader</td>
<td>$36,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor assistants</td>
<td>$22,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$33,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodian/groundskeeper</td>
<td>$24,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total personnel</td>
<td>$44,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$117,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fringe benefits (20% of salary)</td>
<td>$24,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$117,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total salaries &amp; benefits budget</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$117,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ConsultEcon (2012).
where it may be more convenient. NFTA bus routes should be easily identified by Heritage Area staff for those visitors that inquire about reaching the sites by public transportation.

With alternative transportation on the rise regionally, if not locally, Heritage Area sites should examine ways to capitalize on niche or growing transportation methods without sacrificing the needs of their core visitors. For example, opportunities may exist to partner with a carsharing service, such as Buffalo CarShare or Zipcar, in coordinating a carshare parking spot or spots at a Heritage Area site. Such an arrangement could address a need for transportation services to and from the site or neighborhood, while also serving as an outlet for marketing efforts. A similar partnership has been struck between Zipcar and NYSOPRHP, whereby 20 vehicles in the company’s New York City fleet have been outfitted with complimentary Empire Passport park permits and bike racks (Zipcar 2011).

Creativity could also be applied to bicycle programming. The Niagara Frontier region has a number of bike trails, cycling tour packages, and even a bicycle-taxi service. The Heritage Area as a whole could take advantage of these existing resources by providing well-designed bicycle parking, leasing space to a local rental service, or by designing (and perhaps guiding) bicycle tours of the Underground Railroad sites. As with the carshare concept, these could serve both transportation and marketing needs.

Bicycle parking facilities could evoke period architecture or the branding of the Heritage Area, and rental service agreements could include Heritage Area maps.

Transportation options must also consider the needs of visitors with impaired mobility. In general, all facilities will be required to comply with design standards outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. But consideration should extend further than wheelchair accessibility, to include elements of universal design to reduce barriers for a wide range of visitor needs. While it may not be appropriate for low-visitation sites, those with greater levels of visitation could also employ family-friendly parking elements (such as spots designated for families with small children).

Developing the Heritage Area

| Economic Assessment |

While still preliminary, estimates of the Interpretive Center’s operating budget have been created for the Commission by the project team developing that parallel project (see Tables 7 and 8). The projected operating budget for the Interpretive Center is based on assumed attendance levels, earned and non-earned (gift) revenues, and expenditures for the Commission’s principal facility. In the first year of stabilized budget projections (Year 3), the net operating income of the Interpretive Center is estimated at approximately $12,500 (ConsultEcon, Inc. 2012).

The operation and management of the Heritage Area as a whole is expected to add only incremental adjustments to the Commission’s budgetary obligations stemming from the Interpretive Center. Specifically, it is expected that the Director position identified in Table 7 will require the support of two additional staff members, including a full-time Assistant Director and a third Interpreter position (in addition to the Educator positions described in the aforementioned budget projections). The Assistant Director is expected to work on grant-writing and administration, including coordinating with landowners within the Heritage Area, while the additional Interpreter is expected to handle any additional obligations.
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

regarding outreach and education beyond those covered by the Interpretive Center staff.

The resources required to accommodate additional staff salary and benefits should be achievable through the grant-writing capacity added through the Assistant Director position. Increased expenditures should be expected for the publication of additional educational materials as needed. However, most of the estimated revenues and expenditures should not change substantially from the original projections, as the Interpretive Center is likely to be the focus of most Heritage Area income and investment. Additional opportunities and obligations associated with the Heritage Area, distinct from those of the Interpretive Center, are expected to involve coordination with partner organizations and agencies.

Beyond direct spending through salaries and operations, it is expected that the Heritage Area will have a positive economic impact both within the City of Niagara Falls and throughout the Study Area through the development and diversification of local visitor attractions. These impacts occur in three forms: direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Direct impacts will be experienced by businesses or organizations selling goods or services to Heritage Area visitors, in the form of sales, income, and job creation. Indirect impacts are those that are experienced by ancillary industries that supply those businesses or organizations. Induced impacts are those that result from the household

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HERITAGE TOURISM IN SENECA FALLS, NY

Although there are several differences between their respective tourism markets, the Women’s Rights National Historic Park in Seneca Falls (NY) provides some indication of the relative economic impact that cultural heritage tourism can have on surrounding communities. In 2000, the National Park Service measured the economic impacts associated with visitor spending and park operations for the historical park, which includes a visitors’ center and two preserved properties recognizing the 1848 Women’s Rights Convention. The research examined three levels of impact: direct, indirect, and induced. As explained by the researcher, Daniel Stynes:

“Direct impacts are those accruing to individuals, businesses and organizations in the county that receive money directly from park visitors or the park itself. Indirect effects are the sales, income and jobs in what are termed “backward-linked” industries. These are businesses that sell goods and services to those that are directly affected, e.g. a linen supply firm that provides services to hotels or a lumberyard that sells materials to construction companies working on NPS projects. Finally, induced effects capture the re-spending of income earned from the direct and indirect effects. This includes the household spending of NPS and hotel employees in the area for rents, utilities, groceries, local taxes, etc.”

According to the study results, the park’s 25,728 visitors and $958,000 budget in 1999 had a substantial impact on the local economy:

“Combining the regional economic impacts of visitor spending and park operations, the total local economic impact for 1999 of the park (no construction impacts are included) was just under one million dollars in local sales ($958,000), $1.1 million in personal income and $1.3 million in value added. Park operations account for 75% of the impact in terms of value added, while visitor spending contributes 25%. Overall, the park supports about 37 jobs in the area, 11 positions in the park, and another 26 in the local community. The latter accrue from direct and secondary effects of visitor spending in the area, the induced effects of park employees who live in the area, and park purchases from local businesses.” (Stynes 2000)
spending of the income earned through direct or indirect effects (Stynes and Sun 2004). A variety of impacts may be experienced throughout the community as a result of the establishment of the Heritage Area, to one degree or another, including the following:

- The salaries of Heritage Area employees, as well as those of the businesses and organizations that supply the Heritage Area with goods and services (e.g., janitorial supplies, electronics, furniture, etc.) accrue as household income, which may in turn be spent locally by employees.
- Heritage Area-related gifts/souvenirs will be available for purchase at the Interpretive Center gift shop, and may be distributed to other such souvenir outlets throughout the area. Retail sales of these items provide income both for the Heritage Area and for local wholesalers, manufacturers, and/or craftsmen.
- Adequate market demand for organized Heritage Area tours may create new economic opportunities for transportation providers. Tour operators may contract with the Heritage Area management entity, or they may initiate their own tours incorporating Heritage Area sites. Based on input from local motorcoach operators, a dedicated Underground Railroad tour would require sustained interest of approximately 20 customers per day throughout the peak season.

While many tourism and visitation-related economic impacts will be a welcome development for those employed (either directly or indirectly) by the Heritage Area, it may not be enough to create an appreciable impact on the quality of life for local residents who are not connected to the travel and tourism sector. Historically, travel and tourism-oriented businesses have operated within the confines of the southwestern corner of the City, and have made neither physical nor programmatic inroads into much of the rest of the City. This is evident in the discontinuous nature of the urban fabric radiating from downtown along and beyond the principal corridors of Main Street and Buffalo Avenue.

Given their existing physical condition and traditional disconnection from the travel and tourism economy, a program of strategic investment in structures and public spaces within these areas will be necessary in order to ensure that the potential benefits of the Heritage Area are realized by the community at large. These investments should reflect the goals of the Plan as discussed in Chapter I, specifically the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings. These improvements may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Façade and interior architectural improvements
- Streetscape improvements and pedestrian amenities
- Improved and convenient access to local consumer goods and services

The Heritage Area can make such investments while leveraging other efforts, such as those associated with the International Railway Station or the City’s vision for the Main Street Loft Precinct (CNF 2009a). Such investments will bring the dual benefits of making particular sites or areas more attractive for visitation while also improving the quality of life for nearby residents, and may provide a catalyst for other similar investments in their respective neighborhoods (Listokin, Listokin, and Lahr 1998). Improvements to buildings, public spaces, and consumer services will serve as tangible evidence of the ancillary benefits associated with heritage preservation; they will reach traditionally disconnected local residents with tourist amenities in ways that rental car taxes and souvenir spending, for example, cannot.

### Potential Funding Sources

In late 2007, NYSOPRHP’s Heritage Area Program produced a comprehensive and invaluable resource for Heritage Areas, the Heritage Development Resource Guide (Papineau 2007). This guide details a wide range of potential partners that may be available to help Heritage Areas meet their needs, fiscal or otherwise. In addition, the National Park Service’s 2011 Show Me the Money: Tapping Federal Funds for Historic Preservation (NPS 2011d) highlights many resources from federal
## IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

Table 9: Potential funding sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Organization/Agency/Source</th>
<th>Types of Heritage Area-related projects/programs funded</th>
<th>Eligible recipients</th>
<th>Award Amounts</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Express Foundation’s Historical Conservation &amp; Preservation Program</strong></td>
<td>Preservation or rediscovery of major historic sites and monuments, including historic landmarks and public spaces; emphasis on preserving sites that represent diverse cultures</td>
<td>501(c)(3) or 509(a) tax-exempt organizations</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Semi-annual</td>
<td><a href="http://about.americanexpress.com/csr/hpc.aspx">http://about.americanexpress.com/csr/hpc.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>John R. Oishei Foundation</strong></td>
<td>Increasing the number of visitors to the area, specifically for cultural heritage</td>
<td>501(c)(3) non-governmental organizations</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td><a href="http://www.oishei.org/">http://www.oishei.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lowe’s Charitable and Educational Foundation</strong></td>
<td>Community improvement projects and public education facilities</td>
<td>501(c)(3) organizations (so designated for at least two years) and public agencies</td>
<td>$5,000-$25,000</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td><a href="http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/foundant-documents/lowes-charitable-and-educational-foundation-474741445.html">http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/foundant-documents/lowes-charitable-and-educational-foundation-474741445.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Margaret L. Wendt Foundation</strong></td>
<td>Community development and education</td>
<td>Unspecified (recipient list features many types of nonprofits, municipal agencies)</td>
<td>Unspecified (2009 awards ranged from $100 to $500,000)</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Museumwise (formerly Upstate History Alliance)</strong></td>
<td>Institutional development; institutional engagement with communities</td>
<td>501(c)(3) organizations, municipal agencies; museums, historical societies, their staffs and volunteers</td>
<td>Varies by grant type</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td><a href="http://www.museumwise.org/">http://www.museumwise.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Institute for Conservation Assessment Program</strong></td>
<td>Assessments of artifact collections and historic structures that are open to the public</td>
<td>Any type of museum, including historic houses and sites</td>
<td>In-kind (assessment services)</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td><a href="http://www.heritagepreservation.org/cap/index.html">http://www.heritagepreservation.org/cap/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Trust Community Investment Corporation</strong></td>
<td>Tax-credit financing for historic property development</td>
<td>Nonprofit organizations, private developers, local governments</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td><a href="http://ntcicfunds.com">http://ntcicfunds.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Trust for Historic Preservation Historic Sites Interpretation and Education Fund</strong></td>
<td>Priority areas include Transforming Historic Preservation, Saving Historic Places, and Heritage Education</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>$20,000 maximum</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td><a href="http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/nonprofit-public-funding.html">http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/nonprofit-public-funding.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Trust Loan Fund</strong></td>
<td>Financing for commercial and residential redevelopment of historic properties, traditional preservation projects, façade improvements</td>
<td>Not-for-profit organizations, revitalization organizations, real estate developers in designated Main Street® Communities</td>
<td>$350,000 maximum loan amount</td>
<td>Open (temporarily suspended for reorganization)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/loans/national-trust-loan-fund/">http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/loans/national-trust-loan-fund/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Trust Preservation Funds</strong></td>
<td>Planning, education, and outreach activities related to fund priorities: building sustainable communities; reimaging historic sites; promoting diversity and place; protecting historic places on public lands</td>
<td>Members of the National Trust Forum</td>
<td>$2,500-$5,000 (larger grants may be available)</td>
<td>Semi-annual</td>
<td><a href="http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/foundant-documents/preservation-funds-guidelines-eligibility.html">http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/foundant-documents/preservation-funds-guidelines-eligibility.html</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 9: Potential funding sources cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Organization/Agency/Source</th>
<th>Types of Heritage Area-related projects/programs funded</th>
<th>Eligible recipients</th>
<th>Award Amounts</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York Empire State Development Corporation/USA Niagara Development Corporation</td>
<td>Economic development initiatives in Niagara Falls</td>
<td>Unspecified (recipient list features municipal agencies, private development projects)</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td><a href="http://www.usanagara.com/default.asp">http://www.usanagara.com/default.asp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State Archives' Documentary Heritage Program</td>
<td>Collection and care of New York State’s historical records</td>
<td>NY-based not-for-profit organizations including archives, historical societies, museums and other organizations</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td><a href="http://www.archives.nysed.gov/default.shtml">http://www.archives.nysed.gov/default.shtml</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State Council for the Humanities</td>
<td>Encouraging informed public discourse; enhancing New Yorker’s understanding of the world around them, actively engaging New Yorkers with issues and ideas</td>
<td>NV-based nonprofit organizations</td>
<td>Varies by grant type</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nyhumanities.org/">http://www.nyhumanities.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State Council on the Arts</td>
<td>Artistic work of cultural organizations</td>
<td>NY-based nonprofit organizations, units of local government</td>
<td>$2,500 minimum</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nysca.org/public/home.cfm">http://www.nysca.org/public/home.cfm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State Department of Housing &amp; Community Renewal</td>
<td>Heritage areas and historic preservation; community development and revitalization</td>
<td>Unspecified (various; administered through NYS Consolidated Funding Application)</td>
<td>Varies by grant type</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td><a href="http://nysdhcr.gov/Funding/">http://nysdhcr.gov/Funding/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State Environmental Protection Fund</td>
<td>Improvement, protection, preservation, rehabilitation, or restoration of properties for use by all segments of the population for park, recreation, conservation or preservation purposes. Project types dependent on administering agency (see page115).</td>
<td>Municipalities, public authorities, state agencies, and not-for-profit organizations. Eligible projects dependent on administering agency (see page 115).</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nysparks.com/grants/historic-preservation/default.aspx">http://www.nysparks.com/grants/historic-preservation/default.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter H. Brink Leadership Fund</td>
<td>Capacity-building efforts involving mentoring/peer-to-peer organizational development, and other learning opportunities</td>
<td>Historic preservation nonprofit organizations</td>
<td>$1,500 maximum for travel costs and honorarium</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td><a href="http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/nonprofit-public-funding.html">http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/nonprofit-public-funding.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation League of New York State</td>
<td>Identifying, documenting and preserving New York’s cultural and historic buildings, structures, and landscapes</td>
<td>501(c)(3) organizations; units of local government</td>
<td>$3.00-$11,000</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td><a href="http://www.preservenys.org/index.html">http://www.preservenys.org/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western New York Foundation</td>
<td>Education; urban development; arts, culture, and the humanities; land use</td>
<td>Western NY-based 501(c)(3) organizations</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Semi-annual</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wnyfoundation.org/default.asp">http://www.wnyfoundation.org/default.asp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western New York Regional Economic Development Council</td>
<td>Tourism-related economic development</td>
<td>Unspecified (various; administered through NYS Consolidated Funding Application)</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Unspecified (expected annually)</td>
<td><a href="http://nyworks.ny.gov/content/western-new-york">http://nyworks.ny.gov/content/western-new-york</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A number of funding sources specifically related to the preservation of historic structures may deserve priority consideration. As described in the previous section of this Plan, formal designations for historic properties (e.g. the NRHP, NHL, and NYSRHP listings) help to preserve and protect listed cultural resources. Formal designation also provides access to funding programs such as the New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and the National Park Service’s NHL grant programs. Many public and private preservation funding sources identify formal designation as a requirement of funding eligibility.

The EPF funds many environmental and preservation projects throughout New York State. As part of New York State’s recently revised grant administration processes, eligible applicants submit annual Consolidated Funding Applications for each proposed project. EPF funding is made available through several state agencies to municipalities, public authorities, not-for-profit organizations and other state agencies. Funds generally require a 50% match from, or on behalf of, the applicant.
Funding streams that support the goals of the Heritage Area include NYS OPRHP’s Historic Preservation, Heritage Area, and Parks programs. The Historic Preservation Program funds the acquisition, improvement, protection, preservation, or rehabilitation of NRHP-listed properties. The Heritage Area Program funds projects related to the preservation, rehabilitation, or restoration of lands, waters, or structures identified within a state-designated Heritage Area management plan. And the Parks Program funds the acquisition and development of parks and recreation facilities. The EPF also funds designated projects as identified through specific initiatives of the state legislature.

Direct federal funding of preservation projects is currently limited, although a variety of resources exist that may be considered for supplemental funding. Some private funding sources have also expired in recent years, but several local, regional and national foundations and other organizations continue to provide reliable funding for projects of this nature. National organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) administer individual funding streams that can provide the financial impetus for preservation projects, especially when leveraged with other sources. One NTHP fund in particular, the Streb Fund, is dedicated solely to preservation projects within upstate New York. Others may only be available to members of the NTHP Forum. In general, private funding applications are often more successful when directed toward specific projects, or parts of projects, as opposed to open-ended requests for general financial support.

Owners of NRHP-listed investment properties may qualify for investment tax credits for certified rehabilitation work, or other special loan packages. Certification requirements and rehabilitation expenses are usually reviewed by the tax credit administrator, NYSHPO, NPS, or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for compliance and eligibility. Like grant and financing resources, each incentive is administered differently. Some tax credits require high standards of historic integrity which may be difficult to achieve for properties that have been substantially altered over time. Others are aimed at commercial properties, or old but unlisted historic structures. Four commonly-used incentive programs are reviewed in Table 10.

In addition, other funding streams may become available or leveraged by virtue of the relationships that the Heritage Area develops with institutional partners, as described throughout this report. For example, the City of Niagara Falls may be able work with the Heritage Area to capitalize on NYSHPO’s Certified Local Governments program in the planning and development of appropriate historic preservation projects. This partnership could also leverage funding through NYSDOT’s Scenic Byway program for improvements to or along the Great Lakes-Seaway Trail, which follows Main Street through the City of Niagara Falls.

### Economic Development Program

A number of existing agencies and organizations are specifically focused on economic development within the City of Niagara Falls. These agencies and organizations represent potential collaborative partners for leveraging investments and capitalizing on incentives for neighborhood improvements.

#### Local Development Incentives and Investment Programs

- NCIDA Opportunity Zones
- NCCED Microenterprise Assistance Program
- Niagara Falls Empire Zone business incentive programs (several)
- USA Niagara Grant Program
- USA Niagara Downtown Niagara Falls Multi-Modal Access Program

#### Partnering Opportunities

- The Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC) is the primary travel and tourism development organization in the Niagara Falls region. NTCC operates the Niagara USA website, as well as the Official Visitor Center on Rainbow Boulevard. NTCC is a valuable partner for all venues and attractions throughout the area in their efforts to attract visitors, create tour packages, schedule events, and market their services.
The National Parks Service’s Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is being developed concurrent with the Underground Railroad Heritage Area, and features some of the same goals of recognizing and celebrating the rich history of Niagara Falls’ people and places. Administrators from both the national and state organizations could examine partnership opportunities for fundraising, outreach, events, or some administrative tasks. To the extent that the two entities may share interests in local Underground Railroad and abolitionist history, relevant cooperative research or promotions could take advantage of an economy of scale.

The forthcoming Niagara Falls International Railway Station and Intermodal Transportation Center represents a substantial investment and opportunity for economic development immediately adjacent to the Interpretive Center. The station will service in- and outbound rail traffic at the intersection of the Amtrak Empire Service line and the Amtrak/VIA (CA) Maple Leaf line. The development of the new station offers an opportunity for the Heritage Area and the City of Niagara Falls to expand the traditional spatial extent of visitation in the area; the station and the surrounding area can serve as the northern gateway to downtown. The Interpretive Center will have the natural advantage of immediate access to rail passengers, as it will be the closest visitor attraction to the rail station. In addition, the rail station could spur other investments in the immediately surrounding areas, to provide visitors with convenient access to goods and services.

The Downtown Niagara Falls Business Association (DNFBA) represents business and property owners in the downtown area. DNFBA provides a downtown business directory, events calendar, and a list of resources for Niagara Falls business development. Similarly, the Main Street Niagara Business & Professional Association promotes activities and investments along the Main Street corridor. These organizations could be valuable partners in directing investments toward their respective corners of the Heritage Area. They could also assist Heritage Area administrators in their efforts to implement components of this plan such as the walking tour, neighborhood murals, or other programming that could contribute to vibrant commercial environments in those areas.

A number of potential project funding sources as noted in Table 10 could also represent partners in the broader context of local economic development, as institutional partnerships mature and piecemeal investments are shown to have positive economic impacts throughout the community.

Marketing the Heritage Area

As discussed earlier in this Management Plan, the tourism sector is one of the predominant economic drivers within the Niagara Falls region. The purpose of a marketing plan for the Heritage Area is to capture the attention of tourism consumers and persuade them to engage with the history of the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls. As described below, the bi-national Niagara Falls region hosts millions of tourists each year; during the May-October tourism season, there are hundreds of businesses and organizations competing for the attention of those visitors. In such a heavily saturated context, it can be difficult to penetrate background levels of marketing to reach either tourists or local consumers. If the Heritage Area is to attract regional, national, and international tourists, the marketing plan must be engaging, dynamic, and responsive to changes in the tourism marketplace.

Goals of the marketing plan

To that end, the goals of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area marketing plan are as follows:

1. To inform industry partners and the traveling public about the history and current tourism opportunities within the Heritage Area.
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2. To build a network of contacts that is representative of the breadth and depth of the tourism sector as a whole and includes consumer groups with specific interests in American, Colonial, Civil War, African American, and Civil Rights history.

3. To reach regional, national, and international audiences with information about the Heritage Area.

4. To develop the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area as a recognized and popular tourism activity within Western New York and the Niagara Falls region.

Audience

General Niagara Falls travelers

The bi-national Niagara Falls region has been attracting visitors from all over the world for many generations. It draws visitors by the millions each year, from schoolchildren to seniors, newlyweds to families, local day-trippers and international travelers, and everyone in between. A recent analysis of travelers to Niagara Falls (NY) examined visitor demographics, activities, and spending for the 5.5 million travelers that came to the City in 2009 (Longwoods International 2010). This analysis revealed a number of findings that should influence marketing efforts on behalf of the Underground Railroad Heritage Area, including the following insights regarding overnight travelers:

- In 2009, 2.4 million visitors to Niagara Falls stayed overnight; 90% of these were leisure travelers, 3% were business travelers, and the remaining 7% combined business and leisure on their trip.
- Most domestic overnight travelers came from inside New York State (35%). Other common states of origin were Pennsylvania (8%), New Jersey, Texas, Ohio (7% each), California, Florida (4% each), Virginia, and Illinois (3% each).
- Approximately 60% of overnight travelers used the internet to plan and book their trip; less than 10% used a travel agent.
- Commonly stated purposes for overnight travel included visiting friends and relatives (35%), touring (19%), gambling (13%), and special events (10%).
- Common accommodations included friends’ and relatives’ homes (24%), motels (23%), resort hotels (20%), other hotels (32%), campgrounds (6%), and bed-and-breakfasts (4%).
- Of all overnight travelers, 49% stayed in Niagara Falls (NY) for one night, 28% stayed for two nights, 16% stayed for three or four nights, and 7% stayed for five nights or longer.
- The majority of overnight travelers (70%) used their personal vehicles during the course of their trip, while 20% used rental cars. Smaller, but still sizeable, proportions also used air travel (21%) and bus or rail travel (9%).

- Many overnight travelers participated in visits to historic sites and/or museums (52%).
- Overnight travelers spent an estimated $378 million during their respective trips. Average per person expenditures for overnight visitors were $52 for lodging, $34 for food and beverages, $31 for recreation/sightseeing/entertainment, $27 for retail purchases, and $16 on transportation needs at their destination.

Although day-trip (intra-regional) and overnight travelers may enjoy many of the same attractions while in Niagara Falls, marketers reach each audience using different methods and messages. The Longwoods International (2010) analysis revealed the following important statistics regarding the day-trip market:

- In 2009, 3.1 million day-trip visitors came to Niagara Falls; 95% of these were leisure travelers, 3% were business travelers, and the remaining 2% combined business and leisure on their trip.
- Domestic day-trip travelers came mostly from New York (74%), with 9% and 6% coming from Ohio and Pennsylvania, respectively.
- Commonly stated purposes for day-trip travel included touring (30%), gambling (29%), visiting friends and relatives (15%), and special events (6%).
Day-trip travelers tend to come from a number of metropolitan areas within driving distance of Niagara Falls, including Buffalo (36%), Rochester (24%), Cleveland (9%), New York City (7%), Syracuse (5%), Erie (5%), and Albany (3%).

The average size of day-trip travel parties was 2.8 persons (including adults and children).

Fewer day-trip travelers participated in visits to historic sites and/or museums (18%) in comparison to overnight travelers (52%).

Day-trip travelers spent an estimated $187 million during their respective trips. Average per person expenditures for day-trip travelers were $23 for recreation/sightseeing/entertainment, $18 for food and beverages, $12 for retail purchases, and $7 for transportation needs at their destination.

In addition, this market analysis highlighted a number of significant findings regarding visitor demographics:

- There were slightly more male travelers than females travelers to Niagara Falls in 2009.
- The percentage of overnight travelers within the 25-44 year age bracket (45%) was substantially higher than that of day-trip travelers (35%). Conversely, the percentage of overnight travelers within the 65+ year age bracket (10%) was substantially lower than that of day-trip travelers (18%).
- Thirty-four percent of day-trip travelers had household incomes of $25,000-50,000, whereas 20% of overnight travelers were included in this income bracket. Nineteen percent of day-trip travelers had household incomes of $100,000-150,000, whereas 26% of overnight travelers were included in this income bracket.
- Most adult visitors (76% and 70% of day-trip and overnight travelers, respectively) were married, and had no children under the age of 18 (68% and 62%, respectively).
- Most adult visitors (92% and 84% of day-trip and overnight travelers, respectively) identified themselves as white. African-American visitors made up 4% and 6% of adult day-trip and overnight travelers, respectively, and 4% and 10% (respectively) identified themselves as other races.

Cultural heritage travelers

The tourism sector, in Niagara Falls and elsewhere, can be viewed as a combination of many sub-sectors (e.g. adventure tourism, agri-tourism, wildlife tourism, etc.). The Heritage Area and its associated attractions fall within the cultural heritage tourism sub-sector, which includes any travel and tourism “motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region, group or institution” (Lord 1999). This sub-sector has received much attention recently as the number and quality of cultural heritage offerings have increased, both domestically and abroad.

Mandala Research Inc. recently published their “Cultural and Heritage Traveler Study,” a detailed portrait of the types of travelers that normally partake in such activities (McCormick 2010). This new research underscores the popularity of traveling to visit cultural heritage travel sites and attractions. This study described a large and affluent market of cultural heritage travelers, whose preferences and needs should be considered if the marketing plan is to effectively engage them. Some of the most significant findings include the following:

- Seventy-eight percent of all leisure travelers, or 118.3 million United States adults, are cultural heritage travelers.
- Cultural and heritage travelers spent an average of $994 on their most recent leisure trip versus $611 spent by non-cultural and heritage travelers.
- In 2009, cultural heritage travelers had an estimated economic impact in the United States of $192.3 billion.
- As a group, cultural heritage tourists tend to be slightly older and more educated, with higher household incomes.
- Cultural heritage travelers are more interested in experiences where the destination, its buildings and surroundings have retained their historical character.
- Cultural heritage travelers desire to learn more about history and stimulate their minds, and prefer to be intellectually challenged by leisure travel.
More than half (58%) of cultural heritage travelers want an educational experience when traveling for leisure.

Cultural heritage travelers are more likely to participate in a wide range of leisure travel activities, visiting museums and historical sites, participating in culinary activities, attending food and wine festivals, visiting farmer’s markets, and enjoying unique dining experiences as well as fine dining.

Cultural heritage travelers are also interested in tour packages if the package purchased can save them time and/or money.

**Motorcoach travelers**

In the ninety years since the operation of the first “greyhound buses” many positive changes have happened in the group travel marketplace. Motorcoaches are no longer uncomfortable buses with luggage on the roof; they are now luxurious $400,000 coaches with climate control, public address systems, reclining seats, lavatories, wide windows for enhanced viewing, and DVD players throughout the cabin. As they have increased in quality, they have also increased in number; as an indicator of the size of this market, the American Bus Association and the National Tour Association collectively represent thousands of motorcoach companies, tour operators, and tour wholesalers (ABA 2011; NTA 2011). In addition, the Group Leaders of American association estimates that 4.5 million people travel in organized groups each year, many of whom travel by motorcoach (GLAMER 2011).

**Local audiences**

While cultural heritage travelers are a critically important audience for the success of the Heritage Area, it is equally important to consider the needs of regional day-trippers, families, school groups, and traditionally underserved audiences. The needs of these groups do not necessarily correspond to (and, in some cases, may be quite different from) those of the typical cultural heritage travelers described in the Mandala study. For example, as described in Chapter II, local school groups will likely include children from households with less disposable income and educational attainment. The financial, social, and educational needs of these audiences should be reflected in the creation and distribution of marketing materials.

**Tourism industry leaders and staff**

Certain types of outreach materials and events will be oriented toward professionals within the tourism industry. This audience includes travel group leaders, transportation providers, tour operators and wholesalers, travel writers, tourism promotional agencies, and the hospitality industry. Professionals within the tourism industry represent a network of buyers and sellers, each of whom are either directly or indirectly invested in promoting quality attractions and increasing visitation to the region. Working cooperatively with this audience, and aiming specific outreach initiatives toward them, will expand the reach of the Heritage Area’s marketing messages.

**Institutional collaboration**

Support for the Underground Railroad Heritage Area will come in a variety of forms and from a variety of sources. Individual visitors, elected officials, employees, and many others will be called on to help spread the message of the Heritage Area throughout the region and beyond. An important component of this support will be the product of institutional collaboration between the Heritage Area and allied associations representing the interests of local history, preservation, marketing, and education. Potential partners include (but are not limited to) the following:

- American Association of Museums
- American Folklife Center
- Association for Preservation Technology International
- The College of Hospitality and Tourism at Niagara University
- Group Leaders of America
- I Love NY (New York State Department of Economic Development)
- Michigan Street African American Heritage Area
- Museum Association of New York
- Museumwise/Upstate History Alliance
- National Park Service (including the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission)
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- National Tour Association
- Neighborhood and business associations within Niagara Falls
- New York Cultural Heritage Tourism Network
- New York Folklore Society
- New York Heritage Area Association
- NTCC / Niagara USA
- Preservation Buffalo Niagara
- Preservation League of New York State
- Upstate New York Tourism Alliance
- U.S. Travel Association
- Western Erie Canal Alliance
- Western New York Association of Historical Agencies

In some cases, these institutions may also represent potential funding opportunities (see “Developing the Heritage Area”). However, they may be valuable institutional partners for reasons beyond funding, as many provide professional development, government relations, or other services that would assist the Heritage Area in its marketing and developmental efforts. For example, NTCC / Niagara USA is a well-established institution within the local travel and tourism industry, and offers a wealth of international networking contacts, representation at key industry conferences, and a prominent and well-organized Official Visitors Center on Rainbow Boulevard.

Components of the marketing plan

To achieve these goals, four components of the marketing plan must be implemented: branding, resource development, communications, and collaboration. Although these components are organized in sequence, the marketing plan is intended to be an iterative and ongoing process. In practice, it is expected that there will be continuous overlap between these four components as the Heritage Area evolves.

Branding

A branding strategy is essential to creating marketing messages that are consistent, clear, and correctly associated with the Heritage Area. Branding strategies incorporate a range of features that help the public to identify a given organization’s image, services, or products. The Underground Railroad Heritage Area has adopted a logo for use in communication materials, which can continue to serve the organization as it moves from the planning stage into implementation. Additional
elements of a comprehensive branding strategy should be developed prior to the creation and distribution of further marketing materials. Readily apparent features of branding include slogans and graphic communication styles; less apparent (but no less important) features include brand character and organizational culture.

Resource development

Informational video(s)

Video resources are an efficient method of capturing audience attention and sparking viewers’ interest. A DVD (or series of DVDs) exploring the history of the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls and informing viewers of the available of Heritage Area attractions would be useful for educating not only the public but also industry partners. The informational video(s) should be distributed to motorcoach operators, group leaders, and tourism industry partners within the target area (primarily New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and the Province of Ontario). These videos can be used to market the Heritage Area directly to group leaders. They can be distributed to marketing partners, such as Niagara USA, for their use in marketing outreach efforts such as industry conventions or embedded features on their websites. And motorcoach operators and group leaders can use these videos during tours on the mounted screens within the motorcoaches, while groups are travelling from one destination to another. Informational videos may include, but are not limited to, the following content:

- Interviews with historians, local experts, educators, Heritage Area Commissioners and/or staff;
- Footage of Heritage Area sites and interpretive installations, as well as the general scenery of Niagara Falls;
- Clips or montages of Heritage Area reenactments/vignettes, special events, and/or presentations, as well as relevant artwork and cultural attractions; and
- Information on lodging and dining options within or nearby the Heritage Area.

QR codes are becoming commonplace in museums, on advertisements and in other realms of everyday life. Here is an example of their use from a ceramics exhibit at the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, Michigan as well as a collage of images taken around New York City (Photos by Kyle McDonald).
IV. INTERPRETING AND DEVELOPING THE HERITAGE AREA

Mobile technology applications

Mobile technology applications have become increasingly important in all realms of public engagement, and heritage preservation is no exception. Museums and historic sites around the country are harnessing the marketing potential of applications for Smartphones, tablets, and other mobile technologies such as vehicular global positioning systems (GPS) (Fusion Research + Analytics 2011; HMdb 2011). Applications for mobile devices should be developed for the Underground Railroad Heritage Area to guide visitors to important sites and installations, and to provide them with important information about each site as they travel from one to the next. For example, QR codes (barcodes for use with Smartphone scanning devices; the acronym “QR” stands for “quick response”) could be incorporated into interpretive signage to provide visitors with instant access to audio, video, or other content relevant to specific sites. Likewise, Heritage Area “Points of Interest” (POI’s) can be generated to supply downloadable site-specific information for vehicular or handheld GPS devices; a series of POI’s can be further developed into guided tours, complete with audio.

Familiarization tours

Familiarization tours (also known as “fam” tours) are free or reduced-rate trips, organized by tourism venues or related industries/institutions, for the purpose of acquainting industry professionals with the venue or product offered by the organizer. These events are common throughout the tourism industry, and provide mutual benefits to both the organizer and attendees. They are an outstanding resource for building both the market for products and services, and the industry relationships needed to support them. Familiarization tours can be organized in concert with sample itineraries (described below), which would allow organizers to experiment with schedules, attractions, and marketing materials, and to collect valuable feedback from industry insiders.

Sample itineraries

Packaging is a very useful, common, and effective tool in the tourism industry. Sample itineraries can be created to attract interest from visitors consuming other regional offerings, while at the same time strengthening the relationship between the Heritage Area and its tourism and marketing partners. These itineraries should include costs, directions, descriptions of attractions, and hours of operation so that packages can be devised and sold based on visitor requests. Brief descriptions of these itineraries can be included in website materials (for both the Heritage Area site and partner websites) and print materials such as kiosk brochures.

Educational materials

The many stories and lessons associated with the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls are worthy of distribution to regional classrooms, to be utilized as lesson plan activities. As previously discussed, qualified educators and curriculum developers should be engaged in crafting age-appropriate lesson plans, in-school and extracurricular activities, and guides for parents and teachers. As part of the Heritage Area’s educational outreach marketing, a literature guide should be produced to provide parents and teachers a list of resources regarding Underground Railroad and local history for various ages and reading levels. While these materials will primarily serve to fulfill the Commission’s education-related goals, they would have a secondary benefit of marketing the stories of the Heritage Area to local families.

Visitors Guides

Visitors Guides should provide written information regarding the Heritage Area and specific sites, for distribution at informational kiosks, roadway comfort stations, hotels/motels, bed-and-breakfasts, and visitor centers. Specific guides should be created for different purposes; guides distributed at roadway comfort stations should provide broad coverage of the Heritage Area sites, those distributed from kiosks at Heritage Area sites should favor depth of information over breadth. Visitor guides intended for distribution outside of the Heritage Area should include transportation and accommodation information, and sample itineraries.
Communications

A comprehensive approach to communications will incorporate local, regional, and national distribution channels for maximum strategic access to important markets and audiences. An assessment of appropriate media partners should include traditional outlets such as radio, television, and print, as well as new web-based and social media. Traditional local and regional media outlets may include the following:

- Bee Group Newspapers
- Buffalo News
- Local radio stations (three based in Niagara Falls: WKSE FM, WHLD AM, and WJIL AM; several others based in Buffalo and the surrounding region)
- Local television stations (none based in Niagara Falls; several based in Buffalo & Toronto)
- Lockport Union Sun & Journal
- Niagara Falls Gazette
- Niagara Falls Review (Canada)
- Pennysavers of Western New York
- Tonawanda News

In addition to traditional media, the Underground Railroad Heritage Area should establish and maintain a presence within appropriate new media outlets. As part of the public participation process, both a Facebook page and independent website have been established for the Heritage Area, and a list of event attendees could serve as the foundation of a Heritage Area email listserv. The Heritage Area’s website (www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org) and Facebook page (“Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area” on www.facebook.com) already provide ready-to-use resources for media outlets. These could be expanded to include an information sheet, press releases, the Heritage Area logo and other image files, or a series of pre-conceived story ideas complete with resources for further information. Media representatives should also be considering invitees for familiarization tours (see above).

To further promote the Heritage Area and educate users about the Underground Railroad sites identified in Chapter III, an interactive web-based map should be developed to display key sites. The interactive map could utilize a free mapping platform such as Google Maps to identify both extant landmarks and historic sites with unique icons. This resource could be interactive through the use of narratives, photographs, graphic illustrations, or videos connected to each icon. These dynamic elements and content would contribute a richer user experience for website visitors, and could supplement the static information developed for brochures and other print materials.

New media networks could add value to the Heritage Area’s overall communications strategy. These include the following web-based, free-to-use networks, all of which can be used for rapid distribution of Heritage Area news and marketing efforts:

- **Facebook**: This is one of the largest (and still growing) social media outlets, with over 800 million active users, and is an ideal web portal for reaching out to Heritage
Area “fans”. Community pages, groups, and events are becoming increasingly familiar and popular on this social networking site. Although not as flexible as an independent website, Facebook can be used to post Heritage Area news updates, event information, Underground Railroad facts/“FAQs”, photos, and videos. The ability for fans to post comments on the Heritage Area Facebook page gives the Commission an additional opportunity to interact with their fans.


- **Twitter:** Twitter is an information-sharing system that enables its users to send information through their network via short messages (“tweets”). Each tweet is limited to 140 characters in length, but can also include links to sites outside of the network, as well as images or video. Twitter connects businesses and organizations to users and followers with the efficiency of real-time, direct messages at no cost. Like Facebook, it also provides a venue for two-way conversations between Heritage Area administrators and interested stakeholders and visitors both throughout the community and worldwide.

(www.twitter.com/about)

- **YouTube:** This is one of the original innovators of the social media phenomenon. YouTube provides a forum for people and organizations to connect with one another by posting originally-created videos. Heritage
Area administrators could create videos of Underground Railroad activities or events on their own for relatively little expense (using camcorders or similar technology), or employ the services of professional media producers in creating videos. These videos can be uploaded on YouTube on the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad “channel” for users to discover or subscribe to. YouTube videos can easily be embedded into the project website providing dynamic content as well as embedded into the Heritage Area Facebook page.

Foursquare: Foursquare enables users to “check-in” to locations via their mobile device. This emerging new media tool is ideal for specific Underground Railroad sites throughout the Heritage Area. When the user checks into a specific location, a notification is sent to his or her Facebook page, Twitter feed, and/or personal website. Businesses and organizations can award prizes (e.g. discounts or gifts) to visitors who “check-in” to specific sites. This application could be applied to the Heritage Area to help build relationships with local sponsors. For example, a visitor to the site of the Robinson House could receive a coupon for a nearby café. Foursquare can also be applied to specific Underground Railroad events as well.

As with all marketing and communications strategies, it is increasingly important that new and old media messaging and brand development are coordinated and consistent. Although new media outlets are increasingly ubiquitous (and free), they are not a complete substitute for print, radio, television, or other traditional outlets. The two should be developed in sync with one another to reach all potential audiences; traditional marketing efforts should reference the Heritage Area’s new media venues (e.g. “visit us on Facebook”, etc.), and both should feature similar language and design.

Assessment of marketing efforts

Management of Heritage Area marketing efforts should include periodic program assessments to ensure that they are reaching the intended audiences efficiently and effectively. These assessments should be sufficiently detailed so as to provide Heritage Area staff with clear prognoses of the quality of marketing materials and the reach of communication efforts.

The assessment of marketing efforts is an ideal opportunity to collaborate with institutional partners, as these assessments occur with regularity throughout the region for various purposes. In addition, such analyses may be performed per various scales or interest areas (e.g. local vs. national market penetration, or recreational vs. heritage travel audiences).

Assessments should focus on a series of measurable outcomes, including but not limited to:

- Size and scope of the Heritage Area marketing network: How many media outlets have been utilized? What is the geographic distribution of these outlets? Do seasonal changes in regional visitation have an influence on event attendance, public interest, or the overall effectiveness of marketing initiatives?
- Number of Heritage Area offerings and activities: How many events has the Heritage Area hosted? How many non-Heritage Area events have requested either attendance by, or presentations from, Heritage Area administrators? Are Heritage Area offerings adequately distributed throughout the year, and throughout the city or region?
- Number of Heritage Area visitors, inquiries, and attendees at outreach events: What events draw the most support? What is the general demographic composition of attendants (e.g. local residents vs. travelers, school-age children vs. adults, etc.)
- Media attention regarding the Heritage Area and associated sites: What types of Heritage Area activities or events have drawn media attention (e.g. newspaper articles, televised interviews, etc.).
- Tourist and industry knowledge of Heritage Area offerings: How recognizable is the Heritage Area’s brand? Are tourism and industry partners (e.g. hotel concierges, travel agencies, etc.) referring potential visitors to utilize the Heritage Area?

These and other measures of the reach and effectiveness of marketing initiatives should assist Heritage Area administrators in determining the most valuable forms of media engagement and outreach.
V. MANAGING THE HERITAGE AREA

Organizational Structure

Following the formal establishment of the Heritage Area, the ongoing development and operation of the Heritage Area will become the responsibility of the managing entity. This will include any and all ongoing planning, development, and management responsibilities associated with either the Interpretive Center or the Heritage Area as a whole, such as:

- Strategic planning initiatives relative to site-specific interpretation and preservation;
- Financial planning and fund raising activities;
- Program and event planning and implementation;
- Care and maintenance of Heritage Area property.

As described in the enabling legislation, the Commission was assigned the task of establishing the Heritage Area and developing a management plan to guide its continued existence. When this Plan is approved by the City of Niagara Falls and NYSOPRHP, the Commission will cede oversight responsibilities to a nonprofit organization of the same name, the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. This organization was founded in 2011, and is classified as a Public and Societal Benefit-Community Improvement and Capacity Building organization. This entity is comprised of four officers:

- William Bradberry, President
- Denise Easterling, Vice President
- Thomas DeSantis, Secretary
- Ken Wagner, Treasurer
V. MANAGING THE HERITAGE AREA

It is expected that, consistent with the recommendations herein, this organization will add staff positions as resources allow. These positions are described in Chapter IV, and reports associated with the Interpretive Center (ConsultEcon, Inc. 2011). First among these hires will be the Director position, with subsequent support staff to follow. As discussed in Chapter IV, the most imperative duties assigned to staff (particularly in these earliest stages of development) will be identifying and applying for grant awards to establish a foundation of financial support for the Heritage Area.

Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. is not expected to establish formal ties to public agencies or other nonprofit entities in the near term. However, many valuable partner institutions and agencies have been identified throughout this Plan, and the nature of such partnerships may change as they evolve over time. In the near term, it is critically important that the organization develop and maintain working relationships with several key institutional partners, such as the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Committee, NYSOPRHP, NTCC/Niagara USA, and the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission.

Management Capabilities

It is expected that the nonprofit organization will assume any and all appropriate responsibilities associated with operating and managing the Heritage Area and its programs. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Accepting and disbursing funds: Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. will be the recipient of revenues generated by Heritage Area activities, as well as grant funds and financing associated with those activities. It is expected that these funds will be documented consistent with periodic nonprofit reporting responsibilities.

- Acquire, improve, and dispose of property: This organization will be the sole entity authorized to acquire, improve, and dispose of property on behalf of the Heritage Area.

- Manage, operate, and maintain facilities: Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. will be responsible for the use and care of all facilities, including but not limited to the Interpretive Center.

Insofar as Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. may be called upon to make recommendations to public agencies seeking comment on land use decisions regarding historic preservation and the Underground Railroad, it is appropriate to do so in keeping with the goals presented throughout this Plan. The organization itself has not been granted any authority over land use issues; however, it is expected to play some role in ensuring that the preservation criteria and standards it identifies are maintained for those properties which it nominates for formal historic site designation.
I. THE NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE AREA

The vision and dedication of the Commission, along with the expressed support of the public, has produced an organizational foundation from which the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area will thrive and flourish. This Plan will serve as a resource to guide the Commission as the development of the Heritage Area evolves from the planning phase into implementation and management. As such, the Plan puts forth a number of recommendations with the purpose of synthesizing the goals, resources, partnerships, and management capacities described herein. These recommendations, including appropriate action steps where applicable, are summarized in the following pages.

Table 11 demonstrates how each recommendation responds to the series of goals presented in Chapter I, and suggests a basic time frame within which outcomes may be achieved. The time frames associated with each recommendation (short-term, long-term, or continuous action, listed on the far left side of the table) do not necessarily indicate sequential priorities; rather, they are meant to organize a potential framework by which Heritage Area administrators may incrementally develop their organizational resources and responsibilities. Following Table 11, potential institutional partners or other interested parties are identified that may assist Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. in advancing each recommendation. In addition, a series of cross-referenced pages are identified to indicate the appropriate report pages that first address each recommendation directly. It is anticipated that this summary of recommendations will serve as the basis for periodic progress reports on behalf of the organization.

VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The vision and dedication of the Commission, along with the expressed support of the public, has produced an organizational foundation from which the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area will thrive and flourish. This Plan will serve as a resource to guide the Commission as the development of the Heritage Area evolves from the planning phase into implementation and management. As such, the Plan puts forth a number of recommendations with the purpose of synthesizing the goals, resources, partnerships, and management capacities described herein. These recommendations, including appropriate action steps where applicable, are summarized in the following pages.

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## VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 11: Summary of Goals and Recommendations

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<th>Interpretation and Education</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Develop and operate the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Apply for grant funding and finance programs as appropriate for specific Heritage Area initiatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Pursue membership within appropriate and related institutional organizations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Coordinate the design, development, and marketing of an Underground Railroad Walking Tour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Promote the development of well-designed locational markers for significant historical sites within the Heritage Area.</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. While facilitating the development and management of the Underground Railroad Heritage Area, coordinate, where practicable, walking trails, events, marketing efforts etc., with other local destinations and/or heritage attractions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Coordinate with educational institutions for the development of a local research symposium on the Underground Railroad.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Ensure the development of marketing and outreach materials to accommodate various audiences and multiple media platforms.</td>
<td>X</td>
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### VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### HERITAGE AREA GOALS (SEE ALSO PAGE 7)

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- Communicate that the past stories of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement have relevance to the values of liberty and freedom as they are experienced today and can serve as a positive influence on the treatment of these values in the future.
- Develop events that celebrate the exceptional quality of character exercised by those involved in the fight for freedom and liberty.
- Develop interactive experiences throughout the Heritage Area that appeal to all ages.
- Consider including in all programs and special events specific elements that appeal to the tourist primarily interested in recreational activity.
- Capitalize on the existing tourist industry in Niagara Falls.
- Strengthen connections with the hospitality industry and cultural institutions in Niagara Falls.
- Strengthen the heritage tourism programs that specifically address the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls.
- Collaborate with the other local and regional institutions and agencies in the development of experiences for heritage travelers, students, and scholars with multiple interests.
- Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.
- Support quality installations, amenities, and experiences to encourage return visits to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area.
- Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.
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<td>1. Build upon and enhance the existing Freedom Trail Festival.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Partner with local organizations to develop an annual public lecture series on the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and other related topics.</td>
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<td>3. Support the creation of an appropriately placed mural (or murals) celebrating the City’s Underground Railroad heritage.</td>
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<td>4. Support the development of interpretive statuaries to be located at one or more significant historic sites.</td>
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<td>5. Support the development of Underground Railroad heritage curriculum and related field trip activities.</td>
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<td>6. Promote multiple modes of transportation at high-visitaton areas, and capitalize on alternative transportation or public transit options where possible.</td>
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HERITAGE AREA GOALS (SEE ALSO PAGE 7)

Table 11: Summary of Goals and Recommendations cont.
## VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Communicate that the past stories of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement have relevance to the values of liberty and freedom as they are experienced today and can have a positive influence on the treatment of these values in the future.
- Develop events that celebrate the exceptional quality of character exercised by those involved in the fight for freedom and liberty.
- Develop interactive experiences throughout the Heritage Area that appeal to all ages.
- Include healthy and active transportation alternatives through the Heritage Area.
- Capitalize on the existing tourist industry in the Niagara Falls region.
- Strengthen connections with the hospitality industry and cultural institutions in Niagara Falls.
- Strengthen the heritage tourism programs that specifically address the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls.
- Collaborate with the other local and regional institutions and agencies in the development of tourism programs that appeal to educational and recreational sectors.
- Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.
- Support quality installations, amenities, and experiences to encourage return visits to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area.
- Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.

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[www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org](http://www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org)
VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Management Plan Recommendations | Historic Preservation | Interpretation and education
---|---|---
1. Coordinate resources (finances and staff) to manage the development and operation of the Heritage Area and the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center. | X | X
2. Cultivate partnerships with local stakeholders as appropriate for specific Heritage Area initiatives. | X | X
3. Pursue local, state, and federal historic designations for individual sites as appropriate. | X | X
4. Pursue formal recognition by the National Parks Service’s Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program for individual sites as appropriate. | X | X
5. Organize and support further research into key Underground Railroad topics related specifically to Niagara Falls. | X | X | X
6. Review all Heritage Area related projects in light of local and regional plans and studies, such as the City of Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan, Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and Niagara Falls Core City Urban Renewal Plan. | X | X
7. Pursue alternative full or partial ownership options for individual sites as appropriate and as they become available. | X | X
8. Assess marketing efforts on a periodic basis using consistent and relevant measures. | X | X

Historic Preservation

Interpretation and education
## VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### HERITAGE AREA GOALS (SEE ALSO PAGE 7)

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1. Communicate that the past stories of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement have relevance to the values of liberty and freedom as they are experienced today and can have a positive influence on the treatment of these values in the future.

2. Develop events that celebrate the exceptional quality of character exercised by those involved in the fight for freedom and liberty.

3. Develop interactive experiences throughout the Heritage Area that appeal to all ages.

4a. Consider including in all programs and special events specific elements that appeal to the tourist primarily interested in recreational activity.

4b. Include healthy and active transportation alternatives throughout the Heritage Area.

4c. Capitalize on the existing tourist industry in the Niagara Falls region.

4d. Strengthen connections with the hospitality industry.

4e. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.

4f. Support quality installations, amenities, and experiences to encourage return visit to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area.

4g. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.

4h. Strengthen the heritage tourism programs that specifically address the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls.

4i. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.

4j. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.

4k. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.

4l. Collaborate with the other local and regional institutions and agencies in the development of tourism programs that specifically address the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls.

4m. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.

4n. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.

4o. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.

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4v. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.

4w. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.

4x. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.

4y. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.

4z. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.
Many of these recommendations may be supported by a number of specific action steps. These associated action steps are intended to assist Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. as it seeks to implement this Plan. Suggested action steps are summarized below, in addition to potential institutional partnerships that may apply to each recommendation. Reference pages are identified to locate additional discussion throughout this report as appropriate; however, several recommendations are the aggregated product of others (e.g. #6).

Short-term (0-3 Years):

1. Develop and operate the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center.
   
   **Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)
   
   **Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls; NYSOPRHP
   
   **Reference page:** 67

2. Apply for grant funding and finance programs as appropriate for specific Heritage Area initiatives.

   **Associated action step:** Identify and prioritize specific projects/initiatives within the Heritage Area.
   
   **Associated action step:** Identify funding sources that match these priority projects/initiatives, learn the relevant grant cycle and coordinate grant applications.

   **Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

   **Potential institutional partner(s):** NYSOPRHP; funding sources (see Table 8: Potential Funding Sources)
   
   **Reference page:** 112

3. Pursue membership within appropriate and related institutional organizations.

   **Associated action step:** Identify priority membership organizations for the Heritage Area (e.g. New York Heritage Area Association, New York Cultural Heritage Tourism Network, Museumwise/Upstate History Alliance, etc.), and establish membership as appropriate.

   **Associated action step:** Identify memberships organizations that may be appropriate for the future operation of the Heritage Area and/or Interpretive Center (e.g. Preservation Buffalo Niagara, Preservation League of New York State, etc.).

   **Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

   **Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls Division of Planning and Development; NTCC/Niagara USA
   
   **Reference page:** 73

4. Coordinate the design, development, and marketing of an Underground Railroad Walking Tour.

   **Associated action step:** Coordinate the development of marketing brochures and maps for the walking tour.

   **Associated action step:** Collaborate with a consultant to develop a mobile application to guide visitors through the Underground Railroad Walking tour.

   **Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

   **Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls Division of Planning and Development; NTCC/Niagara USA

   **Reference page:** 73

5. Promote the development of well-designed locational markers for significant historical sites within the Heritage Area.

   **Associated action step:** Develop clear, consistent, and unique Heritage Area signage.

   **Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

   **Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls; New York State Department of Transportation; historical site landowners

   **Reference page:** 68
VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. While facilitating the development and management of the Underground Railroad Heritage Area, coordinate, where practicable, walking trails, events, marketing efforts etc., with other local destinations and/or heritage attractions.

*Time frame:* Short-term (0-3 years)

*Potential institutional partner(s):* City of Niagara Falls Division of Planning and Development; Main Street Niagara; Downtown Niagara Falls Business Association

*Reference page:* 116

7. Coordinate with educational institutions for the development of a local research symposium on the Underground Railroad.

*Time frame:* Short-term (0-3 years)

*Potential institutional partner(s):* Niagara University; Niagara Falls City School District; Niagara County Community College; Niagara Falls Public Library; Niagara County Historical Society

*Reference page:* 80

8. Ensure the development of marketing and outreach materials to accommodate various audiences and multiple media platforms.

*Associated action step:* Distribute marketing materials to travel industry media specifically addressing cultural heritage travelers, group travelers/motorcoach travelers, and day-trip travelers.

*Associated action step:* Coordinate with NTCC/Niagara USA’s scheduled familiarization tours and sample itineraries for local, regional, national, and international tourism industry partners.

*Associated action step:* Maintain the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area website and Facebook page.

*Associated action step:* Consider developing other social media products as appropriate (e.g. a Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area YouTube page, Twitter feed, Foursquare network).

*Associated action step:* Advertise Heritage Area events and services through local print, radio, television, and web media as appropriate.

*Time frame:* Short-term (0-3 years); continuous action

*Potential institutional partner(s):* NTCC/Niagara USA; Empire State Development/I Love NY; local media partners

*Reference page:* 121

Long-term (3-7 Years):

1. Build upon and enhance the existing Freedom Trail Festival.

*Associated action step:* Identify vendors, performers, speakers, or other activities relative to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad who could join or perform during the Freedom Trail Festival.

*Associated action step:* Coordinate one of the lectures of the new annual lecture series and/or other Heritage Area outreach events to occur concurrently with the Freedom Trail Festival.

*Time frame:* Long-term (3-7 years)

*Potential institutional partner(s):* Niagara University/Freedom Trail Festival organizers; Main Street Niagara

*Reference page:* 73

2. Partner with local organizations to develop an annual public lecture series on the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and other related topics.

*Time frame:* Long-term (3-7 years)

*Potential institutional partner(s):* Niagara University; NTCC/Niagara USA; Niagara Falls Public Library; Niagara County Historical Society

*Reference page:* 80
VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Support the creation of an appropriately placed mural (or murals) celebrating the City’s Underground Railroad heritage.

**Associated action step:** Identify a building façade(s) to serve as a canvas upon which an artist can create a mural that communicates the Underground Railroad and abolitionist story in Niagara Falls.

**Time frame:** Long-term (3-7 years)

**Potential institutional partner(s):** Niagara Arts and Cultural Center (NACC)

**Reference page:** 72

4. Support the development of interpretive statuaries to be located at one or more significant historic sites.

**Associated action step:** Retain a professional artist to design a unique interpretive statuary series through a competitive bidding process.

**Time frame:** Long-term (3-7 years)

**Potential institutional partner(s):** NACC; NYSOPRHP; City of Niagara Falls

**Reference page:** 70

5. Support the development of Underground Railroad heritage curriculum and related field trip activities.

**Associated action step:** Coordinate the development of an annual one day Underground Railroad story telling event for local schools.

**Associated action step:** Support an annual one day field trip for school children to the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center and/or a tour of other related historical sites.

**Associated action step:** Collaborate with partnering institutions to support the development of curriculum for local schools on the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls.

**Time frame:** Long-term (3-7 years)

**Potential institutional partner(s):** Niagara Falls City School District; New York State Department of Education; Niagara University; Niagara Falls Public Library

**Reference page:** 76

6. Promote multiple modes of transportation at high-visitation areas, and capitalize on alternative transportation or public transit options where possible.

**Time frame:** Long-term (3-7 years)

**Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls; NFTA

**Reference page:** 109

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**Continuous Action:**

1. Coordinate resources (finances and staff) to manage the development and operation of the Heritage Area and the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center.

**Associated action step:** Determine staffing (paid and/or volunteer) necessary to develop and maintain a sustainable revenue stream for management and operation of the Heritage Area and Interpretive Center.

**Time frame:** Continuous action

**Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls; NYSOPRHP

**Reference page:** 110

2. Cultivate partnerships with local stakeholders as appropriate for specific Heritage Area initiatives.

**Time frame:** Continuous action

**Potential institutional partner(s):** as appropriate

**Reference page:** Partnering Opportunities 116

3. Pursue local, state, and federal historic designations for individual sites as appropriate.

**Associated action step (Local):** Prepare Historic Landmark Applications for appropriate sites for local Landmark
VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission.
   
   Associated action step (State/Federal): Prepare a historic context statement for a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Listing and applications for individual sites such as Oakwood Cemetery, the Colt House, the Colt Block, and the Jerauld House, under Criteria A and C.
   
   Time frame: Continuous action
   
   Potential institutional partner(s): City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission; NYSOPRHP; National Parks Service; Preservation League of New York State; National Trust for Historic Preservation
   
   Reference page: 81

4. Pursue formal recognition by the National Parks Service’s Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program for individual sites as appropriate.
   
   Associated action step: Prepare Underground Railroad Network to Freedom applications for the Ferry Landing (Prospect Point) and Suspension Bridge.
   
   Time frame: Continuous action
   
   Potential institutional partner(s): City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission; National Parks Service
   
   Reference page: 99

5. Organize and support further research into key Underground Railroad topics related specifically to Niagara Falls.
   
   Associated action step: Support and seek funding for additional research regarding the following topics: Jerauld House; Cataract House guest registry; African-American hotel workers; the African-American community in Niagara Falls; local Underground Railroad incidents.
   
   Time frame: Continuous action
   
   Potential institutional partner(s): Niagara University; Niagara Community College; New York Historical Research Associates; NYSOPRHP; City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission; Preservation League of New York State; NPS Network to Freedom; Niagara County Historical Society
   
   Reference page: 79

6. Review all Heritage Area related projects in light of local and regional plans and studies, such as the City of Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan, Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and Niagara Falls Core City Urban Renewal Plan.
   
   Time frame: Continuous action
   
   Potential institutional partner(s): City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission; National Parks Service
   
   Reference page: 11

7. Pursue alternative full or partial ownership options for individual sites as appropriate and as they become available.
   
   Associated action step: Identify priority properties for purchase and rehabilitation.
   
   Associated action step: Identify priority properties for façade easements or other forms of preservation easement.
   
   Associated action step: Match project with funding source, track funding schedule and apply for appropriate funding.
   
   Time frame: Continuous action
   
   Potential institutional partner(s): City of Niagara Falls; NYSOPRHP; funding sources (see Table 8: Potential Funding Sources)
   
   Reference page: 83
8. **Assess marketing efforts on a periodic basis using consistent and relevant measures.**

Associated action step: Compile information regarding media campaigns, event attendance, and awareness of Heritage Area events and services to assess market saturation, rate of return, and audience preferences.

Time frame: Continuous action

Potential institutional partner(s): NTCC/ Niagara USA; Empire State Development/I Love NY; local media partners

Reference page: 126

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**Conclusion**

The vision, goals, interpretive themes, and recommendations described throughout this Plan are intended to assist the Commission in advancing the purpose of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area in meaningful and measurable ways. The Commission and its successor nonprofit organization have considerable work ahead of them in achieving the goals associated with both the Interpretive Center and the Heritage Area as a whole. In many respects, the hundreds of hours dedicated to research, outreach, and production associated with this Plan represent only the beginning stages of developing what should continue to be a vibrant cultural institution well into the future. There are operations to manage, funds to raise, relationships to build, and improvements to be made throughout the community, and that work starts now.

As straightforward as some of that work may seem, those involved in the daily operation of the Heritage Area should never lose sight of its value and significance. At the heart of this initiative is a story that needs to be told to a community, and a nation, that needs to hear it. The local and national histories of slavery, the Underground Railroad, and abolitionism transcend divisions of race, class, geography, and time. This shared heritage cannot be relegated to trivial sections of forgotten grade school textbooks; it must instead be respected as a stark and telling reminder of who we are as a people. We may be an imperfect reflection of our perfect founding ideals, but in that reflection we can see not only the darkness of our intolerance but also the light of our humanity. The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area recognizes that humanity through the narrative of the freedom seekers that gathered here so many generations ago, and will continue to celebrate it for the remarkable national treasure that it is.
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MISSION STATEMENT: NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD COMMISSION

It is the mission of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission to educate and inform the community about the rich local heritage associated with the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement, and to conserve and enhance the historic, cultural, economic and architectural resources of Niagara Falls.

The Commission will accomplish this by working with national, regional, state and local agencies, institutions, and organizations and with the local Niagara Falls residents, as described in this Plan.