

President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site



Summary of General Management Planning Requirements

Recommended:

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Summary of General Management Planning Requirements

Introduction

All units of the National Park System are required to have a general management plan which provides broad direction for resource management and visitor use of the site. The required components of a general management plan are spelled out in the 1978 National Parks and Recreation Act (Public Law 95-625). The general management plan is a key component of the park's planning portfolio. A planning portfolio is the assemblage of individual plans, studies, and inventories that satisfy planning requirements and guide park decision-making. A park's planning needs are met through the totality of planning documents currently in use at the park, and not necessarily through a single document. The park's planning portfolio is summarized in the appendix.

Compliance for this document under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is satisfied by Categorical Exclusion 3.2.V: Preparation of internal reports, plans, studies, and other documents containing recommendations for action which NPS develops preliminary to the process of preparing a specific proposal or set of alternatives for decision.

Park Overview

President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site (WICL) was designated in 2010 and the National Park Service assumed operation of the site in January 2011. It is located in Hope, Arkansas, where future president Bill Clinton lived with his widowed mother and her parents for four years after his birth in 1946. The site includes the Birthplace Home (at 117 Hervey Street), a visitor center located in an adjacent historic home, and the Virginia Clinton Kelley Memorial Garden. The history of the site and its importance to the President are documented in many NPS publications. Please see www.nps.gov/wicl for more information.

The purpose of the park was clearly stated in the 2013 Foundation Document, and is based on the enabling legislation for the site (Public Law 111-11).

The purpose of President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site is to preserve the site most directly associated with the former President's youth and early development; to interpret his family's and community's influences on Bill Clinton's education and growth of his ambitions, as well as his sense of inner strength and dedication to purpose; all for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of the public in this and future generations.

The NPS manages WICL to maintain and preserve the Birthplace Home, memorial garden and landscape, and to provide meaningful opportunities for visitors at the site. The park leads guided tours of the birthplace home, provides self-guided interpretive materials in the visitor center, and affords a place for reflection at the memorial garden. The park hosts special events of all sizes, including some featuring the former President and First Lady. Online materials supplement the park's physical presence. Interpretive messages for the park and the significance of the site are spelled out in several NPS documents. Please reference the 2013 Foundation Document for additional details.

Resource Preservation

GMP requirement: measures for the preservation of the area's resources

The primary resources of WICL are the Birthplace Home, memorial garden, and visitor center/administration building, which together form a cultural landscape. Preservation of these resources is guided by the park's Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) and Historic Structures Report (HSR). These reports provide a history of the resources and direct preventative maintenance measures. See HSR pages 223-239, and CLR pages 182, 213-236 for more details.

The home, garden, and landscape are currently in good condition; there are no large-scale restoration or preservation efforts needed at this time. Ongoing routine maintenance of the structures and grounds is expected to provide adequate protection for these resources for many years to come. The park currently contracts custodial services. Little Rock Central High School National Historic Park provides landscaping to WICL.

The park has a small museum collection. The artifacts in the collection are housed at the Midwest Archeological Center in Lincoln, Nebraska and curated by NPS staff. The park's Scope of Collection Statement guides future growth of the collection. There are many period furnishings in the Birthplace Home; these are the property of the Clinton Birthplace Foundation, Inc. and are on a long-term loan to the NPS.

The park relies on the City of Hope to provide fire, police, and emergency response functions. This relationship is formalized through management agreements. The park anticipates upgrading fire suppression and emergency response procedures over time to ensure resource preservation and visitor safety. Guidelines for these efforts are included in the park's Structural Fire Plan.

Development

GMP requirement: indications of types and general intensities of development (including visitor circulation and transportation patterns, systems and modes) associated with public enjoyment and use of the area, including general locations, timing of implementation, and anticipated costs

Given the small size of WICL, additional significant development on site is unlikely. The park has constructed a small accessible restroom facility with storage, and improved walkways for accessibility purposes. All vehicle circulation takes place off NPS property. The focus of the park's facility program is routine maintenance on all structures and grounds, as guided by the HSR and CLR.

There is a need for additional administrative, parking, and visitor orientation space. The park is currently pursuing off-site leasing and partnership opportunities for these needs. If they cannot be met off-site, the Cultural Landscape Report included an option to build a new structure on the current site of the memorial garden. That proposal can be found on pages 182, 219, and 220 of the CLR, and would be used to guide any future development. Many steps would be required before any such development can take place, including funding, design, consultation, and additional compliance.

Minor development that could occur in the near future includes additional signage and wayfinding, improvements for accessibility, and additional interpretive materials. Design, consultation, and compliance for these efforts would take place on a project-by-project basis.

Visitor Capacity

GMP requirement: identification of and implementation commitments for visitor carrying capacities for all areas of the unit

The facilities and grounds at WICL have physical limitations that restrict the number of people who can visit at one time. These visitor capacities have been set for resource protection and visitor safety objectives.

- Birthplace Home. This historic structure cannot withstand heavy live loads, and for this reason the park has established a tour group size of 15 people at one time, not including the park guide. No more than one tour group may be in the home at one time.
- Visitor center. This is also a historic structure, originally built as a family home. The visitor center serves both administrative and visitor functions, leaving relatively little space for visitor circulation. The fire code rating for this building is no more than 75 people at one time, inclusive of staff.
- Memorial garden and lawn area. The park has hosted several large events in this space, and has determined that it can appropriately support no more than 200 people at any given time. This number may be adjusted based on the needs of the event, such as tables, chairs, speaker platforms, and related space issues.
- No parking capacity has been established. All parking areas are outside the NPS boundary and controlled by other parties.

Boundary Considerations

GMP requirement: indications of potential modifications to the external boundaries of the unit, and the reasons therefore

The NPS owns all of the real property within the boundary of the park. The current boundary is adequate for protection of the Birthplace Home and memorial garden. Opportunities may exist in the future to acquire neighboring properties, which are related to President Clinton's childhood, and which could help protect a larger landscape surrounding the home. Any acquisitions would need to be evaluated through a boundary study to determine the feasibility of managing additional structures and grounds.

The park is bounded by roads, highways, and railroad lines. While these present challenges for management and visitor orientation, they cannot be meaningfully addressed through boundary modifications. There is a need for clarification along the southern edge of the boundary, however, where the Arkansas Department of Transportation appears to have a right-of-way encroaching the NPS property.

The biggest need at the park is for operational space. The existing visitor center/administrative headquarters is small and does not meet all the needs for either function. Storage and parking are also concerns. The park is currently addressing these needs through leased storage space and informal agreements for parking. Formal agreements and additional leased office space would likely address these concerns in the long term. If those agreements and leased space cannot be achieved, an operational boundary adjustment could be pursued.

Next Steps

Most of the guidance documents and decisions needed to manage the park are already in place. WICL has identified several areas they can work on in coming years to improve the administrative functions and visitor experience of the site:

- Continue to pursue off-site office and storage space, to free up visitor orientation space in the current visitor center.
- Seek funding for permanent exhibits and interpretive materials in the visitor center.
- Formalize partnerships to provide more options for visitor parking.
- Continue to work with the Arkansas Department of Transportation regarding rights of way along the south side of the property.
- Evaluate the costs and benefits of contract vs permanent NPS staff for custodial functions. Consider partnerships with other Arkansas NPS units for resource sharing.
- Update the park's Foundation Document, especially the Key Issues and Data and Planning Needs sections, as items are addressed and new needs evolve.

Appendix

Primary documents in the WICL Planning Portfolio which guide management are listed below. These documents can be found in multiple locations, including the NPS Planning Portfolio database .

- 2018 General Management Plan Summary (this document)
- 2017 Structural Fire Plan
- 2016 Scope of Collections Statement
- 2015 Cultural Landscape Report/Environmental Assessment
- 2013 Historic Structure Report
- 2013 Foundation Document
- 2012 Long-Range Interpretive Plan/Education Plan