

MISSOULA DOWNTOWN HERITAGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN



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Prepared for the Missoula
Downtown Foundation by
Historical Research Associates, Inc.



HISTORICAL
RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES, INC.



In collaboration with the City of Missoula Historic Preservation
Office and Downtown Missoula Partnership. Supported by a
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Missoula public art. Credit: HRA

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INTRODUCTION



Downtown heritage mural interpreting local railroad history. Credit: HRA



Missoula Textile is a Downtown Missoula heritage business, having been in operation for more than 100 years. *Credit: HRA*

As the downtown cultural landscape evolves during this pivotal time, Missoula is presented with an opportunity to both embrace change and to celebrate the characteristics and values that make its Downtown unique — its heritage.

Downtown Missoula is undergoing a period of unprecedented growth and redevelopment. A flurry of construction activity is bringing forth exciting development in the form of new and remodeled hotels, housing, businesses, shops, restaurants, and even a library. The recently completed Downtown Master Plan presents a far-reaching vision for community design. As the downtown cultural landscape evolves during this pivotal time, Missoula is presented with an opportunity to both embrace change and to celebrate the characteristics and values that make its Downtown unique—its heritage.

Interpretive planning is an essential first step in preserving the heritage and distinct characteristics of Downtown Missoula. It is about identifying the meaning behind natural and cultural resources and finding ways to communicate that meaning to the public. Interpretive planning helps historic sites,

museums, and heritage areas—like Downtown Missoula—consider ideas, make choices, and set priorities about interpretation and educational programming.

The Missoula Downtown Heritage Interpretive Plan is designed to guide downtown heritage interpretation by encouraging audiences to make meaningful connections to the shared human experience represented there. It identifies interpretive goals and issues, examines existing conditions, and provides recommendations to implement over a period of time. It also serves as an instructional tool and source of inspiration for interpretive practitioners. More than anything, it presents a vision for a comprehensive heritage program that will shape the downtown experience and celebrate the distinct character of the community by tying together key natural and cultural resources into a cohesive network.

Overview

Downtown Missoula is many things to many different people. It is a crossroads and a gathering place. It is the homeland of the Salish people and a haven for artists and students. It is buildings made of local brick alongside marble and granite courthouses. It is a story of displacement, growth, and perseverance. At the root of this place is Downtown Missoula's heritage. We consider "heritage" to be the collective fabric that defines and distinguishes Missoula. It is the spirit of place. It is how Missoula sounds, looks, smells, and feels. It is what makes Missoula, *Missoula*. Heritage is the tangible and the intangible, the natural and the cultural. It is both the Clark Fork River and the story of the people who lived beside it. It is memory and experience, art and song. This collective heritage reveals a deeper understanding of where we have been and where we are going.

The wilderness surrounds Missoula. Downtown perches on the banks of the Clark Fork River and sits in the shadow of mountains. The valley walls bear the rippled reminders of cataclysmic glacial floods. Fire has shaped the forests, just as the rivers have reshaped the valleys over centuries of geologic time. Missoula is the natural landscape.

Missoula has been both a departure point and a destination. The Salish and Pend d'Oreille gathered here before traveling east through the valley to hunt bison; the Blackfeet came here when ranging west, sometimes using the high canyons for raiding. Lewis and Clark passed this way and ventured west across Lolo Pass.

Heritage is the tangible and the intangible, the natural and the cultural. This collective heritage reveals a deeper understanding of where we have been and where we are going.

Christopher P. Higgins and Frank Worden established their trading post at Hell Gate in 1860, creating the commercial foundation for what became Missoula. Many others followed.

Missoula grew into an economic hub of Western Montana. The Mullan Road brought people and commerce into the valley and the steel spines of the Northern Pacific and Milwaukee Railroads further bolstered Missoula's fledgling community. A. B. Hammond's lumber empire provided the bones for growth, and the mills at Bonner supplied not only Missoula, but Butte and other Montana towns as well. Fed by the expansive agricultural wealth of the Flathead and Bitterroot valleys, Missoula earned its moniker as the Garden City. Today, Downtown carries on the tradition with Saturday markets. The entrepreneurial spirit thrives in its multitude of coffee shops, restaurants, breweries, and boutiques.

Missoula has long been a gathering place. The Salish harvested camas and bitterroot in the spring. Presidents have given speeches on its street corners. Music festivals have filled the long summer days. Every autumn, students return to the University of Montana and infuse the town with renewed intellectual energy.

Winter brings skiing enthusiasts and long months to anticipate fishing and huckleberry picking in the summer. From the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church to Har Shalom to the St. Francis-Xavier Catholic Church, from the political activism of Gals Against Smog Pollution (GASP) to anti-war protests, Missoulians have a way of turning their collective voices and shared experiences into the foundations of their community.

Downtown also represents a haven for the arts. From the Wilma to the Missoula Community Theater, from vaudeville to River City Roots Festival, the downtown streets have hosted artists of all calibers. The Blackfoot River inspired Norman MacLean to write *A River Runs Through It*, and an affinity for the town brought the passage: “The world is full of bastards, the number increasing rapidly the further one gets from Missoula, Montana.” Each year, filmmakers from around the world arrive for the International Wildlife Film Festival and Big Sky Documentary Film Festival. Every month, Downtown hosts gallery showings and gatherings on First Fridays.

Front Street, once home to a Chinese community and a thriving red-light district, is now home to boutiques and eateries. The sawmills have given way to parks and river trails. Missoula’s Downtown is the confluence of its past and its future. From many perspectives, Missoula is a meaningful place.

Approach

In 2018, the Downtown Missoula Partnership collaborated with the Missoula Historic

Preservation Office and other Downtown Missoula stakeholders to form a Downtown Missoula Heritage Committee. The fruit of this effort appeared in the development of a downtown heritage program they called Unseen Missoula. The interpretive offering, modeled after a highly successful special event of the same name, consisted of a guided tour through several historic downtown buildings. They soon added a second tour focused on the historic riverfront and the story of Missoula’s redevelopment over time. The initial success of Unseen Missoula was evidenced by a season’s worth of tours selling out in a matter of weeks.

The popularity of Unseen Missoula led the heritage committee to consider interpretive planning in order to chart a path forward for future downtown interpretation. In support of this effort, the Montana Department of Commerce awarded the Missoula Downtown Foundation (MDF) a tourism grant to begin the interpretive planning process. MDF and Historical Research Associates, Inc., (HRA), a historical consulting firm headquartered in Downtown Missoula since 1974, provided the remaining resources to produce the plan. The City of Missoula Historic Preservation Office provided oversight and served as an active participant throughout this effort.

The interpretive planning process began in January 2019 with the first in a series of planning meetings held with an interpretive planning advisory group assembled by the MDF (for a list of HRA’s team and advisory group participants, see Planning Resources). Over the course of the spring and summer of 2019, the advisory group convened for planning



Interpretive planning open house, April 2019. *Credit: Benson Media*

meetings led by HRA’s interpretive planners. As the process evolved, HRA’s team personally contacted more than two dozen community stakeholders and potential partners to provide an overview of the process and plan. Moreover, the interpretive planning team hosted a public open house in April 2019 to share information on the plan and to solicit public feedback.

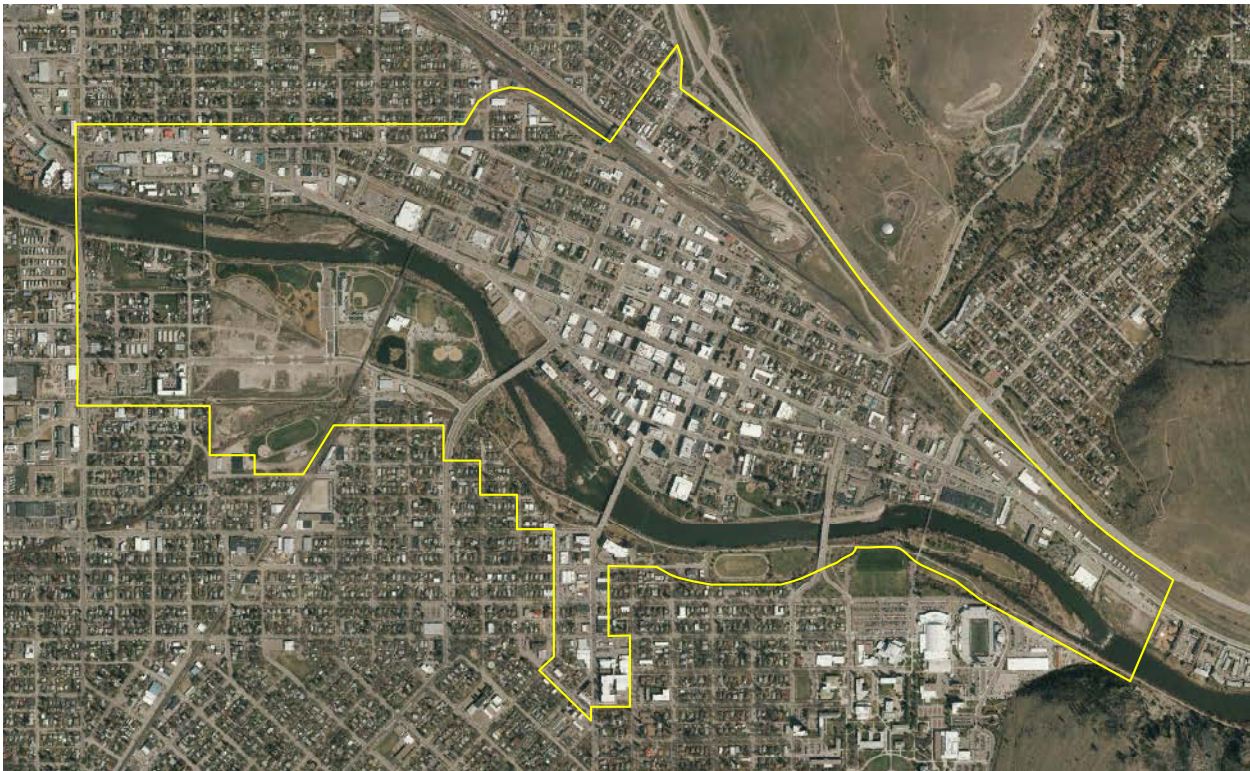
The interpretive planning team offered other community engagement opportunities by hosting information tables at community events, including Fort Missoula’s annual Fourth of July celebration, Out to Lunch, Downtown Tonight, and at the River City Roots Festival. The Missoula Downtown Association also maintained a website and online comment form specifically to obtain feedback on the interpretive plan.

Collectively, the public voice informed the planning process and provided essential feedback. Altogether, the planning team spoke to more than 1,000 community members. The interpretive plan that follows incorporates many perspectives on Missoula’s heritage to reveal both the diverse experiences and shared heritage of Downtown Missoula.

This interpretive plan is presented in four parts. The first part provides the interpretive foundation, which is intended to guide all subsequent interpretive design and media, as well as serve as a resource for anyone developing exhibits, tours, outdoor elements, digital content, and more. The second part describes Downtown Missoula’s existing conditions relative to heritage interpretation and interpretive facilities under development. The third part outlines specific short-, mid-, and long-term interpretive recommendations, based on existing site conditions and current plans surrounding the redesign of certain Downtown Missoula features. The fourth part provides additional resources for developing interpretation and other information about the interpretive planning process.



Out to Lunch, July 2019. *Credit: HRA*



Missoula Downtown Heritage Interpretive Plan project area.

Scope and Limitations

This interpretive plan is limited to Downtown Missoula and follows the geographic parameters identified in the 2019 Missoula Downtown Master Plan. The area includes the Downtown core from Interstate 90 to the park lands along the Clark Fork River's south shore, from the Old Sawmill District to the mouth of Hellgate Canyon. It also includes the Hip Strip and the Catholic Block, and offers gateway interpretive opportunities directed towards Greenough Park and the North Hills, the University of Montana, and the Bitterroot Branch. Areas excluded from this plan that could be well-served by interpretation include other Missoula neighborhoods, parks, trails, and the University of Montana. This plan recommends that such areas receive attention by interpretive planners.

This interpretive plan is purposefully general in its recommendations, presenting concepts and ideas more than directives. It aims to identify a thematic framework upon which interpretation

can be developed and to identify opportunities to shape the visitor experience. These recommendations will give future interpretive practitioners the tools they need to develop interpretation. It does not include specific text, design elements, or detailed locations directing where all interpretive media should be implemented.

“The ‘intangible cultural heritage’ means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills — as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith — that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”

— United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

PART 1
FOUNDATION



Bricks in the basement of the Hammond Arcade *Credit: Athena Photography*

Purpose and Guiding Principles

The **purpose** of the heritage interpretive plan is:

- To use heritage interpretation to communicate the intangible values associated with Downtown Missoula and preserve its overall spirit of place.
- To help identify ways to communicate Downtown Missoula's heritage and guide how future heritage programming is implemented.
- To build awareness of the heritage values that exist in Downtown Missoula.
- To help the public understand why Downtown Missoula is important from multiple perspectives.
- To provide a resource for interpretive practitioners, partners, and stakeholders who might develop Downtown Missoula interpretation.

As part of this process, the interpretive planning group identified the following **guiding principles** for the planning process:

- Explore all available viewpoints.
- Tell Downtown Missoula's stories as accurately and honestly as possible.
- Base interpretation on solid research and knowledge.
- Maintain an open and respectful dialogue.
- Involve stakeholders and the public-at-large and keep them engaged as the plan is developed and implemented.

“Recognizing that spirit of place is transmitted essentially by people, and that transmission is an important part of its conservation, we declare that it is through interactive communication and the participation of the concerned communities that the spirit of place is most efficiently safeguarded, used and enhanced. Communication is the best tool for keeping the spirit of place alive.”

—Quebec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place.

- Respect culturally sensitive sites and issues.
- Provide clear direction for implementation.
- Support the vision of the Downtown Master Plan.
- Produce a lasting impact.

Interpretive Goals

- Interpret Downtown Missoula’s heritage to preserve the spirit of place, promote community identity, and foster civic pride through compelling and meaningful stories and engagement.
- Connect Downtown Missoula visitors to the community and heritage of this place.
- Increase awareness of Missoula’s heritage and its significance in the context of regional and national stories.
- Create opportunities for all Missoulians to recognize Missoula’s identity and feel a greater personal connection to their Downtown.
- Create opportunities for visitors to have authentic experiences by promoting Downtown Missoula heritage resources and the things that make Missoula unique.
- Provide opportunities to engage and educate the public, including school groups and children, on the many facets of Downtown Missoula’s heritage.
- Give under-represented communities and their stories a voice to broaden the overall understanding of the many perspectives that converge here.
- Use interpretation to foster dialogue among heritage organizations, stakeholders, and the public-at-large to build a heritage coalition and enhance long-term partnerships.

Themes

Themes are the heart of this interpretive plan and they provide the framework for all aspects of interpretive programming. They are intended to provide an accessible way to link tangible resources to intangible meanings and provide a tool that develops central, relevant ideas for the audience. Sub-themes and interpretive topics provide additional tools for developing interpretive opportunities. Collectively, the thematic framework presented in this plan is broad enough to tell an overall story of Downtown Missoula and can be applied to the many distinct sites that collectively represent Missoula’s heritage.

When developing interpretation, interpretive entities and community partners should identify the themes that best relate to their resources. From there, they can identify sub-themes, interpretive topics, and specific stories that communicate the thematic values to the public. The connectivity of these themes should provide a thread that links Downtown Missoula’s scattered heritage resources into a cohesive interpretive network.

OVERALL THEME:

Downtown Missoula is a Gathering Place

People have gathered in Missoula from time immemorial to obtain sustenance from bitterroot and camas, to fish the waters of the Clark Fork River and Rattlesnake Creek, and to join other tribes hunting bison in the east.



People gathered here for trade, where the Hell Gate Trading Post provided the commercial foundation for an urban center that became a regional draw for everything from department stores to Saturday markets. It is a place where transportation routes converge: foot paths, railroads, highways, and bike trails. People gathered here to learn, create, and inspire through visual and performing art, poetry, and literature. They gathered here to worship. They gathered here to protest. They gathered here to express themselves in support and opposition, to find their voice and their audience. People gathered here to listen. They gathered here to recreate—in the saloons, on the river, on their bikes, and on their feet. They gathered here for community.

THEME 1:

Landscape and Homelands

Missoula is a community shaped by its unique mountain landscape. This theme focuses on Downtown Missoula's relationship with its natural setting. Downtown Missoula is defined

by the Hellgate Canyon and is an entryway to the mountains and the forests. It is the intersection of eastern and western prairies, once frozen beneath sea and ice. It is a hub of river valleys, a source of camas and bitterroot, and a trout-filled thoroughfare.

Topics within this theme include:

- Climate history, ice age floods, Glacial Lake Missoula, wildfire
- Clark Fork of the Columbia River
- Geology
- Ecology/plants
- Fish and wildlife
- Geography
- Native peoples
- Explorers
- Settlers
- Agriculture
- Water resources
- Flooding
- Exploitation of resources
- Isolation

- Regional urban center
- Environmental thought and leadership
- Stewardship and conservation
- Forestry

THEME 2: Create and Exchange

Downtown Missoula is a place where people create and exchange both goods and ideas. This theme focuses on Missoula's commercial foundations, connections to industry, and legacy as a center of creativity.

Topics within this theme include:

- Making and trading from time immemorial to the present
- Creating with local materials
- Artisans
- Mills
- Art
- Literature
- Products
- Trading posts
- Saturday markets
- Department stores
- Music
- Businesses
- Opportunities
- Industry
- Transportation
- Architecture

THEME 3: Community Life

Downtown Missoula is a community with a rich and diverse history. This theme relates to the stories of people, places, and events that have happened here and are distinct to this place. It also connects Missoula to larger national and international trends, experiences, and events.

Topics within this theme include:

- Indigenous lifeways
- Village life
- Neighborhoods
- Family/home/traditions
- The ordinary and the exceptional
- Religious congregations
- Taverns
- Businesses
- Schools and education
- Theaters/venues
- Clubs
- Organizations
- Events
- Immigrants
- Ethnic groups
- Music scene
- Arts community
- Poets
- Recreation/Athletics
- Fraternal organizations
- Protests
- Celebrations

THEME 4:

Memory and Experience

Throughout its history, people have had many different experiences in Downtown Missoula. This theme acknowledges that Missoula is a place experienced and perceived differently by different people.

Topics within this theme include:

- Memory and experience through literature/art/music
 - Personal stories
 - Recognition of differences
 - Celebration of diversity
 - Connection through shared experiences
- A past viewed through different lenses
 - A place of many perspectives
 - For many it is welcoming, for others not
 - Nostalgia for some, painful for others
 - Familiar to some, unfamiliar to others



Interpretive Theme Matrices

The Interpretive Theme Matrices provide a guide for tying together the site’s interpretive themes to concepts and ideas, as well as topics and stories.

THEME 1: Landscape and Homelands

THEME	CONCEPTS + IDEAS	TOPICS + STORIES
<p>Missoula is a community shaped by its unique mountain landscape. This theme focuses on Downtown Missoula’s relationship with its natural setting. Downtown Missoula is defined by the Hellgate Canyon and is an entryway to the mountains and the forests. It is the intersection of eastern and western prairies, once frozen beneath sea and ice. It is a hub of river valleys, a source of camas and bitterroot, and a trout-filled thoroughfare.</p>	<p>Including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the geologic events that shaped the Missoula landscape Tell stories of Glacial Lake Missoula that once covered the entire Missoula valley and left evidence of its presence imprinted on the landscape Tell how eastern and western prairies converge, creating unique grasslands Show how the mountains formed a natural thoroughfare where people passed through over many eras Investigate how Missoula provided a place of abundance for the Salish, including bitterroot and camas grounds and fishing locations Address human interactions with a changing climate from the ice age to global warming Describe the prominent role of the Clark Fork River in community life Identify the influential scholars and activists who made this place home Discuss natural disasters and how they impacted the community Demonstrate how conservation efforts and urban restoration projects have impacted Downtown Describe Missoula’s geographic isolation and how it influenced community interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate history, ice age floods, glacial lake, fire Clark Fork/Columbia River Geology Ecology/plants Fish and wildlife Geography Traditional use Explorers Settlers Agriculture Water resources Flooding Exploitation of resources Isolation Regional urban center Environmental thought/ leadership Stewardship/conservation Forestry

THEME 2: Create and Exchange

THEME	CONCEPTS + IDEAS	TOPICS + STORIES
<p>Downtown Missoula is a place where people create and exchange both goods and ideas. This theme focuses on Missoula's commercial foundations, connections to industry, and legacy as a center of creativity.</p>	<p>Tell about the establishment of Missoula Mills</p> <p>Share the stories behind individual legacy businesses</p> <p>Hold special events celebrating Missoula's music history</p> <p>Describe Missoula connections to the timber industry and the history of its sawmills</p> <p>Discuss the influence of Milltown Dam on powering Downtown</p> <p>Promote interpretive opportunities centered on Missoula's writers and literary tradition</p> <p>Explore Missoula's historic architecture and share the stories of prominent local architects</p> <p>Interpret Missoula's ceramics tradition</p>	<p>Making and trading from time immemorial to the present</p> <p>Creating with local materials</p> <p>Mills</p> <p>Experience, art, events</p> <p>Literature</p> <p>Products</p> <p>Trading posts</p> <p>Department stores</p> <p>Saturday markets</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Businesses</p> <p>Opportunities</p> <p>Industry</p> <p>Transportation</p> <p>Architecture</p>

THEME 3: Community Life

THEME	CONCEPTS + IDEAS	TOPICS + STORIES
<p>Downtown Missoula is a community with a rich and diverse history. This theme relates to the stories of people, places, and events that have happened here and are distinct to this place. It also connects Missoula to larger national and international trends, experiences, and events.</p>	<p>Install interpretation and integrated public art focusing on Salish life</p> <p>Explore the connections between the University of Montana and Downtown Missoula</p> <p>Hold commemorative events, such as living history exhibitions</p> <p>Describe the work of the Sisters of Providence and their contributions to the community</p> <p>Explore the everyday lives of citizens who represent distinct aspects of the Missoula experience</p> <p>Tell stories about Missoula during Prohibition, such as the Front Street speakeasys</p> <p>Interpret Downtown Missoula military history, including the Spanish American War send-off and Vietnam protests</p> <p>Present special events commemorating music from jazz clubs to house bands to notable performances</p> <p>Identify opportunities to use public art to highlight recreational heritage, from fly fishing to marathon running</p> <p>Identify opportunities to embed Missoula poetry into landscape architecture</p>	<p>Indigenous lifeways</p> <p>Village life</p> <p>Neighborhoods</p> <p>Family/home/traditions</p> <p>The ordinary and the exceptional</p> <p>Religious congregations</p> <p>Taverns</p> <p>Businesses</p> <p>Schools and education</p> <p>Theaters/venues/clubs</p> <p>Organizations</p> <p>Events</p> <p>Immigrants</p> <p>Music scene</p> <p>Arts community</p> <p>Poets</p> <p>Recreation/Athletics</p> <p>Fraternal Organizations</p> <p>Protests</p> <p>Celebrations</p>

THEME 4: Memory and Experience

THEME	CONCEPTS + IDEAS	TOPICS + STORIES
<p>Throughout its history, people have had many different experiences in Downtown Missoula. This theme acknowledges that Missoula is a place experienced and perceived differently by different people.</p>	<p>Commemorate the Salish displacement and Chief Charlo’s removal from the Bitterroot Valley</p> <p>Record oral histories with Downtown Missoula residents and business owners, this could include oral history events at churches, taverns, and other gathering places</p> <p>Work with community members to establish oral history programs; encourage youth to record memories of elders/senior citizens</p> <p>Explore the experience of the 25th Infantry (bicycle corps) stationed at Fort Missoula and the individuals who served and their relationship with Downtown and the Missoula community</p> <p>Describe the St. Paul AME Church and the history of Missoula’s African American community</p> <p>Identify opportunities to tell about the experience of Missoula’s Chinese community</p> <p>Describe the experience of Hmong refugees and their connection to local agriculture and the farmers’ markets</p> <p>Collaborate with organizations such as EmpowerMT and Together Missoula to celebrate the heritage of underrepresented populations in Missoula</p>	<p>A past viewed through different lenses</p> <p>A place of many perspectives</p> <p>For many it is welcoming, for others not</p> <p>Nostalgia for some, painful for others</p> <p>Familiar to some, unfamiliar to others</p> <p>Memory and experience through literature/art/music</p> <p>Personal stories</p> <p>Recognition of differences</p> <p>Celebration of diversity</p> <p>Connection through shared experiences</p>

Setting and Audiences

The Physical Setting

Downtown Missoula is an urban center within a relatively concise geography covered by a grid of city streets. The Clark Fork River's position along the southern boundary of the Downtown core means that motor vehicle traffic from the south enters Downtown on one of three bridges. Two exits off of Interstate 90 provide downtown entry points. Broadway Avenue is the primary east–west corridor leading through Downtown. The public also enters Downtown by foot and bicycle.

Audiences

To design the most impactful interpretive programming and employ the most effective interpretive techniques, it is necessary to identify both existing audiences who actively use site interpretive programs and intended audiences who might be encouraged to visit through well-planned interpretation.

The audiences for interpretive programming in Downtown can be categorized in many ways; the following are just some of the many groups that form heritage interpretation audiences:

- Missoula area residents
- Families
- Senior citizens
- School groups, including elementary, high school students, and college students
- Visitors

Intended Audiences

Downtown interpretation should continue to serve current audiences, but efforts should be made to connect heritage elements to the distinct leisure interests that already attract the public to Downtown. A special effort should also be made through outreach to increase program offerings related to these audiences:

- Visitors coming for special events, such as concerts, film and art festivals, and sporting events
- Current and former Missoula community members interested in aspects of Missoula heritage they personally experienced
- School groups, including college classes
- Researchers, scholars, and artists
- Global and national visitation, through websites, digital content, and digital research tools

Desired Audience Experiences

While themes explain what audiences will learn, experiences describe what audiences will do.

Experiential

- Find Missoula heritage interpretation integrated into the downtown landscape
- Easily become aware of interpretive program offerings and resources
- Follow a heritage trail that is easily identifiable and appealing to a variety of demographics

- Attend an informative and entertaining Unseen Missoula tour
- Participate in a Pop-up Museum exhibition
- Visit a museum or other interpretive facility
- Participate in heritage events that are engaging and entertaining
- Envision what Missoula would have looked like at various points in history

Cognitive

- Know that Indigenous people traveled along this river, fished its shores, and still recognize it as home
- Learn about contemporary Native American cultures and communities
- Understand the U.S. government's removal of the Bitterroot Salish from their homelands
- Understand the hardship and isolation many community members felt, especially the oppressed
- Learn about national and global history through a local lens
- Understand that environmental degradation occurred in Missoula and recognize the work associated with restoration efforts
- Know that Missoula once existed underneath a glacial lake
- Understand ways transportation has changed over time
- Recognize how Missoula has influenced creativity and individuality

- Learn about the lives of individual Missoulians and how they are a reflection of the community-at-large

Reflective

- Have opportunities to reflect and contemplate about the changing landscape, the people who lived here, and how this place influences people on a personal level
- Understand and respect the legacy of Native peoples, settlers, and everyday people
- Make connections between Missoula and other regional locations and landscapes
- Make personal connections to Missoula and consider your downtown memories

Issues and Influences Affecting Interpretation

The following are internal and external issues and influences that may affect interpretation. By identifying these, strategies can be developed to overcome them.

Changing Urban Landscape

Missoula's urban landscape is constantly changing. Downtown is in the midst of rapid redevelopment, and historic structures are being demolished and replaced. Interpretive practitioners must identify ways to place remaining historic structures in context, to provide interpretation in absence of certain

structures, and to identify and celebrate aspects of Missoula’s intangible heritage not represented in the built environment.

Staff Capacity

The Downtown Missoula Partnership (DMP) and the City of Missoula Historic Preservation Office (HPO) are the primary entities promoting a comprehensive heritage interpretation program for Downtown Missoula. Each of these entities operate with a small staff and heritage interpretation is just one of their many functions. Expectations and planning for future heritage interpretation must acknowledge the constraints of the staff, including funding and time limitations, which are not likely to increase in the foreseeable future.

Heritage and Visibility

Downtown Missoula is in a central geographic location. It is a regional hub for business, city and county government, and certain federal functions, such as U.S. District Court. Most people who experience Downtown Missoula only interact with the city’s heritage incidentally. Heritage interpretation needs to be integrated into the downtown experience to appeal to a larger segment of the Downtown Missoula population.

Interpretative practitioners must identify ways to place remaining historic structures in context, provide interpretation in absence of certain structures, and identify and celebrate aspects of Missoula’s intangible heritage not represented in the built environment.

A Living Downtown

Downtown Missoula is a thriving municipality. At any point, people occupy its streets and other public spaces for many different reasons. This presents both opportunity and challenge for interpretation. As a result, there are distractions such as traffic, congestion, construction, and urban noise. Interpretive media and public art may be vandalized by graffiti.

PART 2

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Missoula Art Museum, located in Missoula's historic Carnegie library, building provides an important anchor for Downtown interpretation. *Credit: HRA*

We consider “heritage” to be the collective fabric that defines and distinguishes Missoula. It is the spirit of place. It is how Missoula sounds, looks, smells, and feels. It is what makes Missoula, Missoula.

Interpretation in Downtown Missoula

The people of Missoula have celebrated their downtown’s heritage through public interpretation for more than a century. Monuments, plaques, and memorials scattered throughout the downtown landscape identify historic buildings and tell stories of the Lewis and Clark Expedition or Captain John Mullan and his Military Wagon Road. While much of this existing interpretation provides a base from which to build a comprehensive heritage interpretation network, some locations could be better served with updated signs and public art that are tied into the larger interpretive themes and are more inclusive in scope.

Downtown Missoula heritage interpretation is supported by a variety of organizations and municipal entities. The City of Missoula’s HPO, Historic Preservation Commission, Public Art Committee, and Parks and Recreation Department each assume responsibility for Downtown Missoula heritage interpretation, as do many non-profit cultural organizations.

However, there is no central city department or staff person responsible for overseeing a municipal heritage program.

Various institutions in Downtown Missoula offer exhibitions, interpretive programming, and heritage events. Downtown museums and cultural entities include the Missoula Art Museum, Zootown Arts Community Center (ZACC), Missoula Community Theater, spectrUM Discovery Area, Families First Learning Lab, Boone and Crockett Club, and the Montana Museum of Natural History.

Some businesses exemplify historic preservation and adaptive reuse, while others feature historic artifacts, collections, and interpretive exhibitions. The Florence Building, The Wilma, Top Hat, Charlie B’s, The Oxford, and the Missoula Club are a few of the many downtown locations that contribute to the Downtown Missoula cultural landscape. Others are legacy businesses, which evoke personal memories and speak to the shared experience of generations of Missoulians.

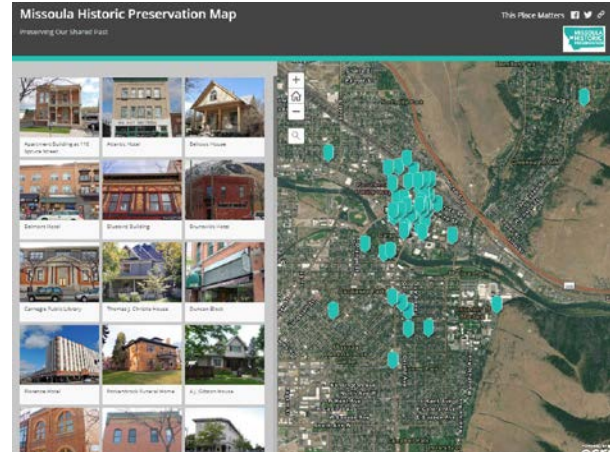
Information and Orientation

Wayfinding Plan and Wayfinding System

In 2013, Missoula produced a “community visioning plan” for a city-wide wayfinding system. Phase I of the Missoula wayfinding plan was completed in 2016, with the installation of thirty-six pedestrian wayfinding signs and two interpretive panels. It recommended the production of nine additional double-sided kiosks that remain in the planning stages. Phase II of the plan called for city-wide vehicle wayfinding signs, parking signage Downtown, “district” identification signage, and “Welcome to Missoula” gateway monuments.



Downtown Missoula wayfinding, *Credit: HRA*



Missoula historic property inventory map

Digital Media

● Websites

Downtown Missoula Partnership (DMP) has a website, <http://www.missouladowntown.com>. It includes event listings, shopping and dining information, information on experiencing Downtown, and other resources. The DMP website also features self-guided Downtown historic and public art walking tours and information on the Unseen Missoula program.

The City of Missoula HPO’s website, <https://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/1657/Historic-Preservation>, includes information about the city’s historic districts and individual buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It includes an interactive map of National Register properties, which became active in June 2019.

● E-Newsletter

In August 2019, Unseen Missoula produced its first e-newsletter. It contained information from the City of Missoula HPO and details on

Unseen Missoula tours and special events, and provides links to purchase tickets.

● Social Media

DMP operates a Facebook account and an Instagram account, @missouladowntown. The City of Missoula HPO operates a Facebook account and an Instagram account, @historicmissoula. Other partner entities also operate accounts on both social media platforms.

● Mobile Apps

HRA produced several downtown digital walking tours using the mobile app platform Next Exit History. Comprising around thirty sites, the tours are each branded as “Unseen Missoula” and feature images, original interpretive text, and audio narration. The tours cover Downtown as a whole, the Basements and Back Alleys tour, the Hip Strip tour, the River Walk tour, and a Missoula Marathon course tour that ends in Downtown.

Print Publications

● Brochures

DMP, in cooperation with the City of Missoula HPO, publishes a Downtown Historic Walking Tour map and a Downtown Public Art Tour map. The tours were originally produced in 2001 and have been updated annually. The tours are published each year in the Guide to Downtown Missoula. The walking tours consist of a map with color-coded overlay lines for history and art. Numbers on the map represent stops that correspond with interpretive text. The information provides an overview of architecture

and history. It includes narratives describing fifteen historic buildings and one historic site and lists another twenty-one buildings. It also includes a brief description of four historic districts and lists five others.

● News Media

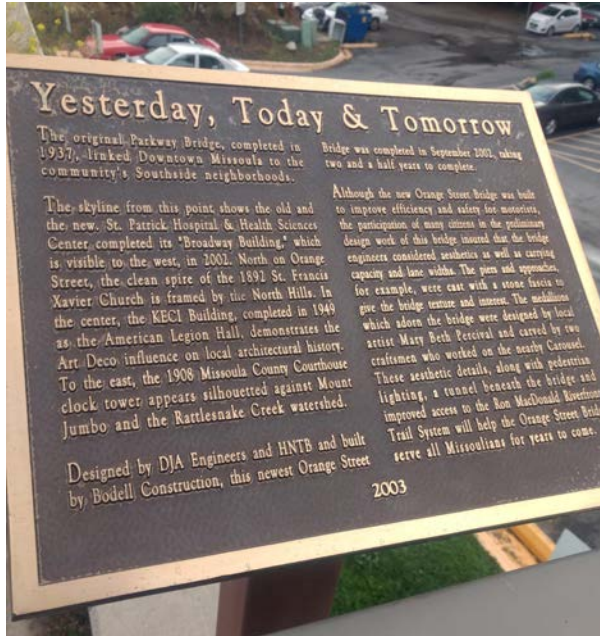
The Missoulian publishes original feature stories based on Missoula’s heritage. These stories provide one of the most accessible ways to communicate Missoula’s heritage. In addition, the *Missoula Current* online newspaper includes a regular column focused on local history. Local television media also features occasional reports covering aspects of Downtown Missoula heritage.

Audience Experience

Interpretive Media

● Interpretive Signs in Parks

Interpretive signs and plaques are scattered throughout Downtown Missoula parks and greenspace. The signs cover an assortment of natural history and cultural heritage topics. Some provide effective interpretive opportunities and remain in excellent condition. Other signs are weathered and dated or are located in obscure places where they receive little attention. The signs appear to have been sporadically produced over the past half-century, and there is little connectivity between the topics they address and messages they deliver.



Interpretive plaque on the Orange Street Bridge. *Credit: HRA*

● Interpretive Signs along City Streets

Interpretive plaques on historic structures constitute the majority of the textual interpretive media along Downtown streets. The signs are varied in appearance and cover an assortment of heritage topics. Many of the signs are cast-metal, such as the signs along Orange Street Bridge. Other signs appear to have been produced to standards of the Montana Historical Society in framed, laser-printed metal plaques. Notable examples include Free Speech Corner and residences in the East Pine Historic District.

● Downtown Public Art and Artifacts

Missoula has a wealth of public art and several heritage-related public art installations were recently completed. Much of the downtown

public art was commissioned by the City of Missoula's Public Art Committee. Downtown Missoula also contains scattered historical artifacts, some of which have been the subject of interpretive media. This includes features such as ghost writing, sidewalk bricks, the Missoula Mills stone in Caras Park, and the steam locomotive at Circle Square.

● Exhibitions

The Unseen Missoula Pop-up Museum has filled a void for downtown exhibition space by hosting temporary exhibitions.

The Missoula Art Museum has hosted many temporary exhibitions centered on city heritage. This includes exhibitions featuring local artists, as well as shows presented in coordination with local communities and organizations, such as the Hmong community and the Missoula Urban Indian Health Center. The Zootown Arts Community Center (ZACC) has also hosted heritage exhibitions, including a collaborative exhibition on Missoula's Music history with the Lost Sounds Project.

Other entities have hosted temporary exhibitions, including St. Francis-Xavier, which produced a series of interpretive panels about the history of the Catholic Block, and members of the Har Shalom community, who prepared a temporary exhibition on the history of Missoula's Jewish community. Downtown Missoula heritage is sometimes interpreted during First Friday art exhibitions at local businesses and at events hosted in Caras Park.

● **Publications**

Downtown Missoula heritage topics are widely covered in publications, with many listed in the Selected Topical Resources (Part 4: Planning Resources). These resources are available at the Missoula Public Library and downtown bookstores and focus on such topics as local history, natural history, and architecture.

● **Archives and Collections**

Heritage research resources are available at the Missoula Public Library. This facility will open in 2020 with an expanded Montana Room containing local history collections. The University of Montana Archives and Special Collections maintains local and regional history collections, including collections related to many of the city’s prominent residents. The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula contains an extensive collection of Downtown Missoula artifacts, as well as archival collections. A recent addition to Missoula research resources is *The Missoulian* online collections, available through newspapers.com, which includes fully-searchable daily newspapers dating back more than a century.

Programming

Individuals and organizations provide guided heritage interpretation programs in Downtown Missoula. Some have operated commercially, while others have been conducted as special events for the public at large. Businesses also offer heritage programming, such as Big Sky Breakout, which features historically-themed escape room activities and a downtown scavenger hunt. With the recent addition of the Unseen Missoula program, heritage tours have expanded to become a regular downtown activity.

Unseen Missoula Tours

Unseen Missoula has offered three separate programs. The most successful of these offerings involve guided tours through historic buildings. Tour guides include graduate students, historians, teachers, and even comedians. The Unseen Missoula program offers interpretive training to the guides, who generally follow a scripted program while leading groups of up to twelve individuals.

Potential Partners

Partnerships and collaboration are themselves a part of Missoula's heritage. Schools, businesses, non-profits, and municipal entities have worked together for decades to develop heritage events and programming.

For the purposes of this interpretive plan, partners are defined as entities that have a distinct interest in the interpretive plan. These include representatives from cultural organizations, as well as representatives from implementation entities such as businesses and building owners. Ultimately it will be the partners who implement the plan.

Below is a list of several of the primary organizational partners and potential partners involved in Downtown Missoula heritage interpretation:

Arts Missoula

Arts Missoula is a community resource for the coordination, development, and support of arts and culture for the benefit of the Missoula community. It oversees a variety of heritage-related events, including First Friday, Germanfest, and First Night.

Boone and Crockett Club

Housed in the Historic Milwaukee Depot building, the Boone and Crockett Club's national headquarters promotes conservation, wildlife habitat preservation, and wildlife management. Its gallery includes taxidermized specimens and exhibitions related to club history.

City of Missoula Historic Preservation Office

The City of Missoula HPO maintains a range of heritage resources on its website, including an interactive historic properties map, historic preservation toolkit, and information and resources on historic preservation. The office's mission extends beyond compliance and administration. Its work with heritage interpretation includes Preservation Week activities, collaboration with the Unseen Missoula program, exhibitions at the Pop-up Museum, and an assortment of other programs and events. The office also oversees the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), which is a citizen board assembled to oversee historic preservation in the city. The HPC recognizes heritage businesses and hosts other preservation-related special events.

City of Missoula Parks and Recreation

The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the management of all city parks, green spaces, and conservation lands. It oversees the urban forestry program and also operates educational programs, such as summer camps. Missoula parks contain extensive heritage interpretation features, including signage, public art, and artifacts. The parks themselves are community heritage assets, with many established shortly after the city's founding.

Destination Missoula

An organization dedicated to promoting local tourism, Destination Missoula operates an



Caras Park serves as Missoula's town square and offers the ideal jumping off point to experience Downtown Missoula heritage. *Credit: HRA*

interactive website and produces city travel guides that feature extensive information about Missoula's heritage resources. It also operates the MSO Hub visitor information center.

Downtown Missoula Partnership

The DMP is the collaboration of three distinct organizations, the Missoula Downtown Association (MDA), the Downtown Business Improvement District, and the Missoula Downtown Foundation (MDF). As a collective administrative entity, the DMP promotes economic development and an assortment of community initiatives in Downtown Missoula. It publishes a historic walking tour, public art tour, and operates the Unseen Missoula program. It also staffs a team of Downtown Ambassadors who provide information and orientation Downtown, operates Caras Park, offers weekly Out-to-Lunch and Downtown ToNight events and seasonal and special events, among other things.

Families First Learning Lab

A longtime operator of a children's museum in Downtown Missoula, Families First is now housed in the Missoula Public Library and operates as the Families First Learning Lab. The organization offers family education and learning through play educational activities.

Historical Museum at Fort Missoula

The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula seeks "to inspire a sense of place and history for Missoula County by collecting, studying, interpreting, and preserving the region's natural and cultural heritage." The organization serves as Missoula's historical society, and houses extensive collections related to Downtown Missoula heritage. Among its various programs, it administers an annual Preserving Missoula County History Grant Program, which is available to all Missoula County non-profit organizations involved in historic preservation and interpretation.

MCAT

Started as Missoula Community Access Television, MCAT is Missoula's community media resource which promotes the spread of information and exchange of views, ideas, and opinions. It provides opportunities for community use of media equipment, air time to reach television audiences, and coverage of municipal events and meetings. It houses an extensive archive of media footage ranging from city council meetings to concerts at long shuttered music venues. It also operates youth summer camps.

MCT, Inc.

MCT, Inc., is Missoula Children's Theatre and Missoula Community Theatre. MCT Center for the Performing Arts presents theater productions, hosts community events, and offers a variety of after-school programs and summer camps.

Missoula Art Museum

Located in Missoula's original Carnegie Library, the Missoula Art Museum rotates approximately twenty to twenty-five exhibitions through six galleries, with many shows celebrating Missoula's heritage and arts tradition.

Montana Museum of Arts and Culture

The Montana Museum of Arts and Culture (MMAC), part of the University of Montana, holds a significant fine art collection. While the MMAC typically exhibits its

collections on campus, the opportunity exists for collaboration and partnership with Downtown Missoula heritage programs.

Montana Natural History Center

Located along the Milwaukee Trail on Hickory Street, the Montana Natural History Center (MNHC) hosts exhibitions relating to local natural history and cultural heritage. It also offers programming and events, such as Nature Adventure Kids Day Camps, RiverFest, teacher workshops/resources, field trips, nature programs, exhibitions, and self-guided nature trails.

National Museum of Forest Service History

The National Museum of Forest Service History (NMFSH), located near Missoula International Airport, houses extensive collections related to national forests. Downtown Missoula served as the regional headquarters for the U.S. Forest Service in the Northern Rockies. The NMFSH offers education outreach opportunities and curates temporary exhibitions.

National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) administers two national trails that include Downtown Missoula: the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail and the Lewis and Clark National Historical Trail. The NPS offers interpretive resources and occasional grant

funding opportunities connected with such things as small-scale education projects and National History Day awards.

Preserve Historic Missoula

Preserve Historic Missoula advocates for historic preservation in the city, while also striving to teach the residents of Missoula and Western Montana to appreciate the built environment and cultural resources. The organization's interpretive programs during Preservation Month include historic pub crawls and celebrations of heritage businesses.

Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History

The Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History's (RMMMMH) mission extends well outside of Missoula, but it also serves as an important resource for military and veteran's history related to Downtown Missoula and the city's connection to international events.

The Roxy Theater

The Roxy Theater, built in 1937 and featuring a recently restored façade, promotes both cinematic and cultural programming and serves as a hub for arts and culture. The International Wildlife Film Festival, which owns the Roxy Theater, is the most notable of several festivals hosted there each year.

Zootown Arts Community Center

Housed in the historic Studebaker Building,

the Zootown Arts Community Center (ZACC) works to bridge community and art in Missoula. The ZACC offers an assortment of community programming, including the "Tell Us Something" youth storytelling series and children's rock camps.

“Successful interpreters use accurate and comprehensive information but convey more than facts. If information and learning were the primary goal of most visitors, they would never need to visit. Audiences want something more. They seek meaningful experiences.”

— David L. Larsen, *Meaningful Interpretation*

PART 3
RECOMMENDATIONS



Introduction

The recommendations describe potential actions for partners and interpretive practitioners to undertake to strengthen heritage interpretation in Downtown Missoula.

While some of the recommendations pertain to specific entities, such as the City of Missoula's HPO, Missoula Parks and Recreation, or the Unseen Missoula program, other recommendations provide useful direction for other partners, which include municipal and county entities, private businesses, and non-profit organizations. The recommended actions are organized into several different categories beginning with the connectivity of Downtown interpretation and continuing with actions related to special events, the Missoula Downtown Master Plan, pre-visit/distance interpretation, audience experience, interpreting many perspectives and underrepresented heritage, program administration, scholarship, additional interpretive elements, and collaboration. Each recommended action is included in an implementation plan, which provides a road map for the next ten years. This section of the interpretive plan should be revisited regularly by partners and interpretive practitioners as conditions change. Staff should adjust the implementation plan by removing accomplished tasks and adding new actions when necessary.

Actions Related to the Connectivity of Downtown Interpretation

Fundamental to the improvement of the audience experience in Downtown Missoula is to consider the connectivity of its heritage interpretation. Interpretive media communicates messages that are thematically linked, and such communication should direct audiences to related messages—or, more specifically, related interpretive media. The actions that follow are designed to support the connectivity of interpretive sites.

Heritage Interpretation Anchors

Successful heritage interpretation is dependent on taking a holistic view of the audience experience. Audiences need visitor services such as basic information, clear orientation, and restrooms. With Missoula's occasionally harsh climate, audiences also need accessible indoor spaces. Although Downtown lacks an established visitor center or a history museum, Missoula has a number of community resources that are ideally positioned to anchor downtown heritage interpretation. They each occupy a distinct section of Downtown, making them logical places from which to initiate interpretive experiences.

- Caras Park is home to heritage attractions, including Carousel for Missoula, countless special events, and is adjacent to the Wilma Theater, the Unseen Missoula Pop-up Museum, and the Ron MacDonald Riverfront Trail System. Walking paths and bike trails begin there that pass by public art, interpretive signs, and memorials. The area is an ideal jumping-off point for a variety of heritage experiences.
- Zootown Arts Community Center (ZACC), located in the historic Studebaker Building, includes creative spaces featuring exhibitions, classrooms, and an auditorium for special events. Besides the ZACC, the Big Sky Documentary Film Institute is managed from the space. Part of the Gasoline Alley historic block, redevelopment there presents extensive opportunity to interpret the changing Missoula landscape, arts heritage, and historic architecture.
- Located in Missoula’s original Carnegie Library, Missoula Art Museum currently features regular exhibitions celebrating many facets of Missoula heritage and its arts tradition. The building is adjacent to the Missoula Art Park, across the street from Adventure Cycling and the Missoula Federal Building, and near the East Pine Street Historic District.
- The Missoula Public Library provides numerous resources to educate the public on Missoula heritage, including the Montana Room, which houses an

extensive local history collection. The library is also home to the Families First Learning Lab, SpectrUM, and MCAT. Once the library redevelopment is completed, these institutions will share exhibit space offering heritage interpretation. The library already features a variety of heritage-related programming, including “Know Montana” history lectures.

Heritage Interpretation Gateways

Like heritage interpretation anchors, interpretation gateways present opportunity to initiate interpretation in Downtown Missoula by providing an entry point for audiences to experience downtown heritage interpretation. At the same time, they also should interpret the heritage resources existing beyond the city center in an effort to link them to Downtown Missoula.

- Greenough Park and Waterworks Hill Trailhead, situated in the mouth of the Rattlesnake Valley, present interpretive opportunities to draw connections between Downtown Missoula and the Missoula heritage beyond Downtown. A new Waterworks Hill trailhead will provide views of Downtown Missoula, as well as interpretive opportunities. Pedestrians and cyclists enter Downtown Missoula from this location.
- University of Montana/Riverbowl/Kim Williams Trail is a gateway to both the Hellgate Canyon and the University of Montana. The footpaths converging along



Wayfinding, interpretive kiosks, and public art along the Cincinnati Heritage Brewing Trail. *Credit: Cincinnati Heritage Brewing Trail.* The Freedom Trail street medallion. *Credit: The Freedom Trail*

the north side of campus provide a main access point to Downtown Missoula. A wide range of interpretive opportunities exist there, but special attention should be paid the role of the University and its connection to the Missoula community.

- The hub of the Bitterroot Branch and Milwaukee Trails is an ideal gateway for audiences entering Missoula from locations west and south of Downtown. Its location near the Old Sawmill District, Montana Museum of Natural History, McCormick Park, and Ogren Park also present opportunities to link interpretation among these southside assets. Interpretation leading outward can include the connections to southside neighborhoods, Fort Missoula, and the Bitterroot Valley beyond.

Downtown Missoula Heritage Trail

A primary connectivity recommendation for interpreting Downtown Missoula’s heritage is the establishment of a Downtown Heritage Trail. An ambitious public history project in itself, Missoula should consider following the lead of downtowns elsewhere in the United States that

have successfully established heritage trails and have found that they provide clear direction for audiences to immerse themselves in heritage experiences. Notable examples include the Boston Freedom Trail, Salem (MA) Heritage Trail, and Rochester (NY) Heritage Trail. Heritage trails differ from published walking tours in that they lead audiences with physical guidance such as sidewalk paint, medallions/markers, or both. In Downtown Missoula, a collection of such features should be developed and integrated into the landscape to blaze the trail. The development of a Heritage Trail also aligns with the directives of the Downtown Master Plan, which presents the concept of “Downtown Trails,” citing the benefits they bring for economic development.

- Identify a series of key heritage resources that can be linked together along a heritage trail.
- Update the downtown wayfinding plan to provide for clear implementation and design of the Downtown Missoula Heritage Trail.
- Wayfinding showing the heritage trail should be added to existing wayfinding signs.
- Wayfinding kiosks identified in the

Wayfinding Plan should be developed as stops along the trail. The sign design should be modified to include a map of the heritage trail. A digital kiosk should also promote the trail.

- The heritage sites along the trail should be marked with a custom cast metal medallion or other marker featuring a heritage trail logo.
- Street medallions/markers and lamp post markers will guide trail users to specific locations.
- Guiding bricks showing the trail can also be added as streets are redeveloped.
- Each of the Heritage Interpretation Anchors (identified above) should be included in the trail and offer a point of entry.
- Printed Downtown Missoula Heritage Trail brochures should be produced and be made readily available to provide interpretation on sites without interpretive signs.
- Customize the existing mobile app to correspond with the Heritage Trail or develop a new stand-alone customized app for that purpose.
- Take the necessary steps to build public awareness of the new trail, since its success depends of the presence of physical markers and well-developed interpretation.

Actions Related to Special Events

Downtown Missoula hosts special events throughout the year. They include concerts,

brew fests, farmers markets, parades, and so much more. The events also present opportunities for heritage interpretation.

- Downtown Missoula heritage partners should identify opportunities to integrate heritage interpretation into existing special events and consider opportunities to host others.
- Develop subject-related pop-up exhibitions, such as an exhibit telling the story of the Missoula farmers markets or an exhibit for a brewfest chronicling the history of brewing in Missoula.
- Encourage the production of Missoula heritage-related documentaries for local film festivals.

Actions Related to the Missoula Downtown Master Plan

The 2019 Downtown Master Plan presents a vision for Downtown Missoula over the coming decade. Among the “big ideas” included in the plan are heritage-related initiatives for Missoula to “stay original” and “stay authentic,” while ensuring that Downtown remains a “downtown for all.”

According to the Master Plan, “New bridges, streets, parks, plazas, gardens, murals, art, historical markers, community centers, fire stations, libraries, and other public buildings should explore, and express, Missoula’s uniqueness.” The Missoula Downtown Heritage Interpretive Plan is intended to support the recommendations set forth in the master plan.

Pop-Up Exhibitions

The Downtown Master Plan calls for pop-up art spaces. As the Unseen Missoula Pop-up Museum has shown, temporary exhibitions bring life to otherwise under- or un-utilized spaces. Throughout Downtown there are spaces that could host temporary exhibitions relating to Missoula's heritage. Places like the Florence Building, the new library, and the many windows along downtown storefronts could be temporarily transformed into interpretive exhibitions. The pop-up exhibitions, which could be curated by organizations, individuals, student groups, or other entities, will draw people Downtown and provide an opportunity to explore aspects of Missoula's heritage that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Caras Park, Higgins Avenue, & Orange Street Bridges

The Downtown Master Plan envisions park improvements that include a gateway entrance to Caras Park with new signage and a visitor kiosk to improve wayfinding. It also identifies opportunities to improve and enhance Higgins Avenue Underbridge to make it an attractive public space featuring art. This infrastructure provides an ideal opportunity to not only make the area more functional and welcoming, but to integrate heritage interpretation. Caras Park should also provide an anchor for Salish interpretation along the riverfront, including Salish place names. This heritage interpretive plan supports the master plan's recommendation of incorporating design elements and historical and cultural content developed in collaboration with the Selis Qlispe

Culture Committee into Downtown Missoula public art and interpretation.

Canvasses for Native Art by Native Artists

The Downtown Master Plan identifies several potential canvasses to showcase Native art by local Native artists. Preliminary designs include patterned streetscapes and a wall mural. Such features not only beautify the Downtown Missoula landscape, but provide an opportunity to recognize Missoula's Indigenous peoples.

Interpretation to Support Downtown Master Plan Initiatives

Identify other opportunities where interpretation can support initiatives prescribed by the Downtown Master Plan. This should include interpretation to support enhancements to Caras Park and other downtown parks, developing Downtown Trails, Historic Preservation, Historic Resources, Local Historic Districts, and in Maintaining Missoula's Urban Forest.

Actions Related to Pre-visit/Distance Interpretation

Pre-visit/distance interpretation is an important consideration in any twenty-first century interpretation, but it presents a unique challenge for Downtown Missoula. There are so many channels of information available, it can



A collaborative interpretive program with Pedal Missoula and Unseen Missoula, June 2019. *Credit: Benson Media*

become difficult to lead traffic to the preferred source of information.

Unseen Missoula Online Presence

The following actions are recommended for the Unseen Missoula site maintained by DMP, <https://www.missouladowntown.com/tours/unseen-missoula/>.

- Create a distinct URL and establish an independent website for Missoula heritage resources and Unseen Missoula.
- Feature a selection of interpretive content and historical photographs.
- Embed selected video clips from an Unseen Missoula YouTube Channel, which could be developed to host Missoula heritage videos.
- Feature selected interpretive content on the site, such as PDFs of mobile app narratives and exhibition text panels; allow visitors to download the panels, so that schools, students, and the public-at-large can experience interpretation beyond the geographic confines of Downtown Missoula.

- Feature lesson plans that incorporate other elements available on the website, such as research materials like National Register of Historic Places nomination forms, oral histories, and video clips; partner with schools and educators to develop the lesson plans.
- Provide information about upcoming programs and events, maintain the Unseen Missoula signup infrastructure, and include links to partnering institutions and related historical sites and organizations.
- Create promotional videos featuring Historic Downtown Missoula.

Downtown Heritage Social Media

DMP operates a Facebook account and an Instagram account, @missouladowntown. The City of Missoula HPO operates a Facebook account and an Instagram account, @historicmissoula. Unseen Missoula operates an Instagram account @Unseen_Missoula that features historical photographs and announcements about heritage programming.

- Support and expand current social media presence by keeping content up-to-date
- Expand content by regularly posting historical photographs featuring many Missoula heritage subjects and eras.
- Identify opportunities for Downtown heritage partners to develop and share content



The rainbow crosswalk adjacent to the Missoula Art Park uses public art to demonstrate inclusivity. *Credit: HRA*

Actions Related to Interpreting Many Perspectives and Underrepresented Heritage

Missoula’s heritage is a collective fabric of many ethnic and religious communities. The story of Missoula’s settlement and the growth of communities is fundamental to its heritage and should continue to be explored, especially from a variety of perspectives. It is also imperative to integrate Missoula’s underrepresented voices into downtown interpretation to provide more accurate, comprehensive, and inclusive interpretation there.

Indigenous Heritage

Missoula is part of the traditional homelands of the Salish people. Over the centuries, Salish, Kootenai, Pend d’Oreille, Nez Perce, Blackfeet, and other Indigenous groups maintained a presence in the Missoula Valley. Native peoples figured prominently in the earliest trade that led to the establishment of Hell Gate and eventually Missoula.

The contributions of Indigenous peoples to the community fabric of Downtown Missoula cannot be overstated. It is also essential to interpret Native American history beyond the nineteenth century. Interpretation should reveal stories of individual community members and their Missoula experience. Interpretation of Native American history should be both stand-alone, integrated into other topics, and integrated into the downtown landscape through public art.

- Consider ways to integrate Native American heritage into other topics, such as military history, arts, music, literature, poetry, transportation, and other topics.
- Highlight Native American heritage



Quote integrated into landscape. *Credit: NPS*

According to “Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call to Acknowledgement,” prepared by the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, “Acknowledgement is a simple, powerful way of showing respect and a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people’s history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth.” U.S. Department of Commerce, [usdac.us/nativeland](https://www.usdac.us/nativeland)

through public art by commissioning Native artists to produce work.

- Honor Missoula’s Indigenous people, particularly the Salish, through land acknowledgement at public events.
- Develop and install a network of signs in Missoula’s riverfront parks that provide Salish place-names based on consultation and collaboration with the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee.
- Incorporate view overlays with historical photographs at riverfront sites.
- Identify an opportunity to recognize Missoula as Salish homelands and the contribution of the Salish people to Missoula heritage by collaborating with the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee in the naming of a major public works project or in the renaming of existing infrastructure.

Women’s History

Like other historical topics, women’s history should be both integrated into Downtown Missoula interpretation and presented on its own. Missoula was home to the first female representative to the U.S. Congress, Jeannette Rankin, but there are countless other individuals to highlight and stories to share that speak to women’s contribution to politics, business, the arts, and every other topic presented in this plan.

- Commemorate Missoula’s women’s history with special programming as part of Women’s History Month.
- Develop fixed interpretation highlighting the lives and achievements of influential Missoula women, such as Edna Wilma, Bess Read, and the Sisters of Providence.
- Assess existing interpretation to ensure that women, and their contributions to Missoula heritage, are represented throughout.

African American History

Missoula’s African American heritage is underrepresented in local histories. Recent scholarship is helping to alleviate some of this oversight. So, too, should interpretation.

- Highlighting Missoula’s African American history and other underrepresented populations and the challenges they faced provides opportunity to understand Missoula’s past from a variety of perspectives.
- Identify locations to interpret black history in Missoula in meaningful ways,

which can include fixed interpretation, murals, and public programming.

- Support the efforts of Missoula's IDEA for Racial Justice to create a mural to commemorate Missoula's black history.
- Identify opportunities to commemorate Missoula's heritage as part of Black History Month.
- Collaborate with EmpowerMT, which organizes a variety of events in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, including events such as Read for Peace, youth art and essay contests, and a community march, to develop interpretive programming related to Missoula's black history.

Immigrant Communities

Missoula has long been home to immigrant communities, including Irish, Greek, Italian, Hmong, Belarusian, and many more. From the early settlers of Hell Gate to the refugees of SoftLanding, people from many cultures contribute to Missoula's heritage, and their experiences should be included in future heritage interpretation.

- Incorporate heritage interpretation into existing downtown events, such as Germanfest and the International Food and Culture Day, by developing exhibitions about the history of these Missoula communities.
- Provide opportunities for immigrant communities to collaborate on pop-up exhibits related to their history, art, and culture.



Har Shalom exhibit on the history of Missoula's Jewish community at the Unseen Missoula Pop-up Museum.
Credit: HRA

- Identify interpretive opportunities to link Missoula's immigrant communities to other facets of community life, such as arts, music, restaurants, and businesses.

Religious Congregations

Missoula is home to many religions, with missionaries figuring prominently in the town's early settlement and churches remaining among the cornerstones of community ever since. Many of the city's historic churches remain, some are gone. Other congregations have never had their own building. Some of these congregations are prominent, while others are underrepresented in local histories.

- Identify opportunities to interpret all types of congregations.
- Encourage collaboration on heritage programming among Missoula faith communities and consider the connections between the churches and other facets of Missoula's heritage.

- Collaborate with Downtown Missoula churches to offer special history and architectural walking tours.

Actions Related to Audience Experience

The following action items are both long- and short-term in scope, which recognizes that some items can be undertaken with existing resources while others will take considerable planning and outside funding to implement.

Wayfinding

- Install welcome archways as prescribed by the Downtown Master Plan.
- Consider how existing and future exterior interpretation in the wayfinding plan relates to the overall visitor experience and how it connects with the interpretive themes.
- Complete implementation prescribed by the Wayfinding Plan but use interpretive themes to guide content.
- Integrate the Downtown Missoula Heritage Trail into the wayfinding system.

Unseen Missoula Pop-up Museum

Beginning in 2018, the Unseen Missoula program utilized space in the basement of the Hammond Arcade building for the final stop in its “Basements and Back Alleys” tour. It also hosted a special exhibition called “Sign of the

Times” during a First Friday at the space. These examples show that the space provides valuable opportunities to promote Downtown Missoula heritage.

- Consider renaming the space now known as the Pop-up Museum, the “Unseen Missoula Museum” to establish brand consistency and to avoid confusion relative to other pop-up exhibits located downtown.
- Provide opportunities for partner entities to utilize the Unseen Museum to both promote their organization and ensure that the heritage program has regular sources of interpretive content.
- Allow exhibitions to remain on a three-month rotating basis, depending on seasonal considerations and competing events.
- Build a recurring audience through regular special exhibitions.
- Promote the exhibitions as part of First Friday art walks.
- Based on audience reception and participation over time, make annual assessments of the museum space to ensure that it continues to meet the community needs.
- If demand is sufficient, consider the viability of expansion into adjacent space, investing in improvements, or pursuing a different, more-versatile space.

Heritage Tree Program

Missoula’s urban forest is essential to its

downtown heritage. The Downtown Master Plan recognizes the importance of maintaining Missoula's urban forests. Interpretation can support this effort by encouraging the community to make personal connections to Missoula's urban trees. Municipal heritage tree programs exist in cities throughout the country, including Spokane, Seattle, and Portland. Heritage trees are trees of special importance and their recognition as part of Downtown Missoula heritage can serve to prevent their destruction and facilitate community connections between natural history and cultural heritage.

- Establish a heritage tree program for Downtown Missoula as a collaborative effort between the City of Missoula Parks and Recreation and HPO.
- Develop recognition criteria and inventory potential eligible heritage trees on city property.
- Develop a program for landowners to list their trees on a heritage tree registry.
- Provide interpretive markers to identify heritage trees.
- Produce a Missoula heritage tree guidebook to allow the public to better understand and connect with Missoula's urban forest.
- Offer special events and tours hosted by urban forestry staff to commemorate heritage trees on Arbor Day or Earth Day.

Fixed Interpretation

Interpretive media should be developed with clear goals in mind. Media that fails

to communicate a desired message, or is unsuccessful at communicating any message at all, detracts from the overall audience experience.

- Assess existing fixed media, such as kiosks and panels, to ensure that it is thematically appropriate for the intended audience experience.
- Undertake a comprehensive review and inventory of all exterior interpretive signage that considers the themes, intended audiences, and desired audience experiences. Identify worn or obsolete signs and remove them and replace them with signs based on interpretive themes.
- Develop new interpretation to replace obsolete interpretation that attracts audiences and captures attention.
- Produce interpretive text that is both concise and engaging, that facilitates personal connections to heritage resources.
- Use consistent design language derived from the interpretive themes to build cohesion among new interpretive media.
- Develop and install additional interpretive signs related to the landscape, particularly the differences between how it looks now and how it looked at various points in time.
- Collaborate with the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee to develop and install signage and place names relating to Salish lifeways along the Clark Fork River.
- Develop fixed interpretation relating to underrepresented Missoula communities, including the LGBTQ community, ethnic, and religious groups.

PART 3: RECOMMENDATIONS



Bold colors, central location, and visual organization provide for an effective interpretive experience at Missoula's Rail Link Park. *Credit: HRA*



Interpretation at the Sgt. Bozo Dog Park at Fort Missoula Regional Park allows today's park users to make personal connections to Fort Missoula's heritage. *Credit: HRA*



Interpretation at Milltown State Park, the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers, is the product of collaboration between the Selis Qlispé Culture Committee and Montana State Parks. *Credit: HRA*



Relatively recent heritage values present another layer of the community's story, such as this public art on a Downtown signal box showing cyclists visiting Adventure Cycling. *Credit: HRA*

- Develop fixed interpretation relating to underrepresented eras and topics.
- Integrate interpretation into the built environment, such as painting a highwater mark from the 1908 floods on a bridge, or embedding poetry about the Clark Fork River on a riverside bench.

Interpretive Programming

Interpretive programs includes such things as talks, guided walks, and special programs

like living history exhibitions and bicycle tours. Regardless of the setting, interpretive programs, particularly those presented as part of Unseen Missoula, should be developed to meet the expectations of the audience and align with the standards of such organizations as the National Association for Interpretation and National Park Service. Interpretive programming should be presented in a way that will promote both understanding and feeling about the subjects being presented, which will ideally support program goals.



Unseen Missoula's Basements and Back Alleys tour. *Credit: Athena Photography*

- Develop and implement standards for program development that can be used by Unseen Missoula and partners with a clear link between interpretive themes and the content being presented.
- Facilitate the development of programming that provides audiences with the opportunity to make personal connections to the meanings being explored.
- Develop thematic programs tailored to specific age groups that also meet current curriculum standards that will facilitate dialogue among students.
- Partner with Missoula County Public Schools and other area educators to develop a menu of program offerings that identifies applicable grade levels, cognitive learning abilities, and targeted content standards.
- Create a series of Unseen Missoula geocaches located at historic points of interest throughout Downtown and record them on geocaching.com. Each geocache should include interpretive text about heritage resources.
- Collaborate with local taverns to host Pub Nights/Heritage Trivia focused on Missoula heritage.
- Organize a Missoula history story-telling series at downtown taverns, with each venue being the subject of that evening's stories.
- Collaborate with the Stories and Stones to offer special living history events in Downtown Missoula.
- Use projection technology to project historic facades on contemporary buildings, or to screen a historic concert performance at current and former music venues.

Heritage Entertainment

Interpretive programming can not only be meaningful, but it can also be entertaining. Downtown heritage interpretive programming should be presented in a variety of formats as a means to appeal to a variety of local and visiting audiences.

Actions Related to Program Administration

Downtown Missoula lacks a primary entity responsible for interpreting heritage. Rather, it depends on a collaboration of city and county departments, non-profits, and businesses. It is the intention of this interpretive plan to support such collaboration and encourage partnerships in all aspects of downtown interpretation. However, a dedicated staff person, or persons, tasked with facilitating the overall downtown heritage program could raise the level of what can be accomplished. A program coordinator could support partner grant proposals, grow the Unseen Missoula program, provide a point of contact for special events, and promote connectivity and consistency among newly developed downtown interpretation. Whether such responsibility could be added to an existing position or whether it requires a new position is unclear. But identifying a point of contact responsible for program administration would support the ongoing growth of downtown heritage programming and help ensure its viability.

Program Management

- The primary entities involved in Downtown Missoula heritage interpretation should consider the feasibility of establishing a heritage program coordinator position or adding program management responsibility to an existing position. The heritage program management responsibility should exist within one of several possible downtown entities: City of Missoula Parks and

Recreation, City of Missoula HPO, or the DMP.

- If delegating management responsibility to a single position is not feasible, City of Missoula Parks and Recreation, City of Missoula HPO, and the DMP should consider ways to delegate program management responsibility in order to maximize resources, create consistency among new interpretation, and reduce unnecessary administrative overlap.

Staff Training

- Facilitate staff review of existing tours and programs to consider themes, intended audiences, and desired audience experience.
- Develop and implement additional interpretation training opportunities for Unseen Missoula staff and partners.
- Develop interpretive training resources for use by Unseen Missoula staff and partners.

Actions Related to Scholarship

By supporting scholarship, museums and heritage districts present the opportunity to reinvigorate contemporary understanding of historical events. It allows the heritage area to benefit from student/scholar/artist/researcher projects, and they, in turn, benefit from practical experience of their work.

- Collaborate with University of Montana faculty to provide opportunity for student-

led heritage projects. This could involve public history, public art, filmmaking, drama, and many other areas of study.

- Promote the availability of local research resources at the Missoula Public Library's Montana Room.
- Provide links to online research resources on a dedicated Unseen Missoula website, or other Missoula heritage website.
- Encourage the collection of oral histories as part of heritage events.

Actions Related to Additional Interpretive Elements

An effective interpretive program should strive to reach diverse audiences by enhancing its offerings through various forms of media.

Mobile Apps

Mobile apps allow for the delivery of richer and more extensive content than fixed interpretation alone. They also can appeal to younger audiences as well as audiences who are unable to physically visit the site. They can offer multiple languages and can provide audio content for visually impaired audiences and alternate content for people of all abilities. However, it is essential that potential audiences are made aware of the such resources and that any technology-based interpretation is regularly maintained and updated.

- Assess the digital presence of Downtown Missoula heritage and ensure that

adequate resources are available, and that mobile app presence supports the goals of the heritage interpretive plan.

- Revise or replace existing mobile app tours to coordinate with stops along the proposed heritage trail

Digital Kiosks

Digital kiosks can be used to feature interpretation, spread information on downtown events, and improve wayfinding.

- Consider the feasibility of installing digital information kiosks at prominent downtown locations.

Actions Related to Collaboration

The success of Downtown Missoula heritage interpretation is dependent on effective collaboration. Government entities, non-profits, businesses, and individuals all share the responsibility of communicating Missoula's heritage. A concerted effort among these parties is essential in developing and maintaining an impactful heritage program.

University of Montana Partnerships

- Collaborate with University of Montana faculty to offer field school opportunities for students. Develop additional internship opportunities related to specific courses of study.

- Collaborate with Art Department faculty to encourage arts, programming, and events related to Missoula heritage.
- Partner with the Admissions Office to offer downtown heritage tours to prospective students.
- Reach out to other academic departments (Education, International Relations, Geography, Native American Studies, etc.) to identify ways to build partnerships.

Tribal Cultural Entities and the Native American Community

Downtown heritage practitioners should continuously consult and collaborate with Tribal cultural entities and Missoula Native American community organizations.

- Collaborate with the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee when developing interpretation related to Salish and Pend d'Oreille history and culture. The committee and its staff are experienced in developing interpretive panels and maintain other resources.
- Collaborate with Missoula County Public Schools Indian Education Department to host community programming and events. The department maintains a variety of resources related to Native American heritage and includes information on the many tribes that form Missoula's Native American community.
- Collaborate with American Indian Student Services and Kyiyo: Native American Student Association to provide

opportunities for these organizations to host programming and events Downtown.

- Partner with Missoula Urban Indian Health Center (MUIHC), which hosts many events related to Missoula's Native American heritage. Past partnerships have included exhibitions at the Missoula Art Museum and community events at Caras Park. In recent years, the MUIHC has sponsored and organized the Indigenous Film Festival, which not only draws visitors Downtown, but also provides a forum for lectures and other public programming. Other MUIHC downtown events include Native American Heritage night at a Missoula Osprey game and a fun run located at McCormick Park.

Media

- Develop relationships with media outlets to promote Downtown Missoula heritage and to utilize available resources. Public entities, like MCAT, maintain extensive resources relating to Missoula heritage. Numerous hours of video in their archive includes everything from municipal committee meetings to concerts. In addition, MCAT offers A/V equipment for public use.
- Promote local heritage stories produced by commercial media, such as local television networks and *The Missoulian*. Commercial media remains an essential vehicle for informing the public on heritage interpretation opportunities and events.

Actions Related to Educators and Youth Outreach

Partners and interpretive practitioners should make a concerted effort to build relationships with educators and youth program facilitators.

Age Specific Programming

- Offer special Unseen Missoula activities and tours to summer camps.
- Develop a Junior Ranger-style activity book.
- Develop a Missoula Public Art scavenger hunt targeted at families.
- Create Unseen Missoula geocaching collections featuring a variety of heritage sites.

Develop Unseen Missoula Educator Materials

- Prepare an Unseen Missoula resource guide for teachers.
- Create an advisory group of educators who already teach Downtown Missoula heritage topics that downtown heritage interpretation practitioners can consult with regarding development of new curriculum materials.
- Integrate state and national curriculum standards into new materials.
- Work with educators to develop lesson plans and other curriculum-related materials.

Actions Related to General Outreach and Marketing

Proactive marketing and outreach will expose new audiences to Downtown Missoula heritage and will make it increasingly relevant to existing ones.

Local and Regional Outreach

- Work with community organizations to promote new temporary exhibits, programming, and other special events.
- Partner with local schools and cultural organizations.
- Work with the Montana Historical Society to develop outreach strategies to market program offerings to heritage tourists elsewhere in Montana.
- Identify and collaborate with cultural institutions that interpret Missoula heritage, including the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula and the Montana Museum of Arts and Culture to identify opportunities to exhibit their historical collections, collaborate through digital offerings, and develop other cooperative learning opportunities to further shared interpretive goals.
- Develop special programming for events, host rotating exhibits, and offer a variety of interpretive tours to ensure that heritage program offerings remain relevant to their local audience while adding value to the visitor experience.

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020-2023	Mid-Term 2023-2026	Long-Term 2026-2030
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Actions Related Connectivity of Downtown Interpretation

Designate interpretation anchors	X		
Designate heritage gateways	X		
Develop a downtown heritage trail		X	

Actions Related to Special Events

Integrate heritage interpretation into existing special events	X		
Develop subject-related pop-up exhibitions	X		
Encourage the production of Missoula heritage-related documentaries	X		

Actions Related to the Missoula Downtown Master Plan

Develop pop-up exhibitions	X		
Caras Park and bridge improvements		X	
Canvasses for Native art by local Native artists	X		

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020-2023	Mid-Term 2023-2026	Long-Term 2026-2030
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Actions Related to Pre-visit/Distance Interpretation

Unseen Missoula Online Presence			
Create a distinct URL and establish an independent website for Missoula heritage resources and Unseen Missoula	X		
Feature a selection of interpretive content and historical photographs	X		
Embed selected video clips	X		
Feature selected interpretive content on the site	X		
Feature lesson plans on the site		X	
Provide information about upcoming programs and events	X		
Create promotional videos featuring Historic Downtown Missoula		X	

Downtown Heritage Social Media			
Support and expand current social media presence by keeping content up-to-date	X		
Expand content by regularly posting historical photographs featuring many Missoula heritage subjects and eras	X		
Identify opportunities for Downtown heritage partners to develop and share content	X		

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020–2023	Mid-Term 2023–2026	Long-Term 2026–2030
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Actions Related to Interpreting Many Perspectives and Underrepresented Heritage

Indigenous Heritage			
Integrate Native American heritage into other topics, such as military history, arts, music, literature, poetry, transportation, and other topics	X		
Highlight Native American heritage through public art by commissioning Native artists to produce work	X		
Honor Missoula’s Indigenous people, particularly the Salish, through land acknowledgement	X		
Develop and install a network of signs in Missoula’s riverfront parks that provide Salish place-names based on consultation and collaboration with the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee		X	
Incorporate view overlays with historical photographs at riverfront sites		X	
Recognize Missoula as Salish homelands and the contribution of the Salish people to Missoula heritage by collaborating with the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee in the naming of a major public works project			X

Women’s History			
Commemorate Missoula’s women’s history with special programming as part of Women’s History Month.	X		
Develop fixed interpretation highlighting the lives and achievements of influential Missoula women.		X	

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020–2023	Mid-Term 2023–2026	Long-Term 2026–2030
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Actions Related to Interpreting Many Perspectives and Underrepresented Heritage

Women’s History (con’d)			
Assess existing interpretation to ensure that women, and their contributions to Missoula heritage, are represented throughout.		X	

African American History			
Identify locations to interpret black history in Missoula in meaningful ways, which can include fixed interpretation, murals, and public programming	X		
Support the efforts of Missoula’s IDEA for Racial Justice to create a mural to commemorate Missoula’s black history	X		
Identify opportunities to commemorate Missoula’s heritage as part of Black History Month	X		
Collaborate with EmpowerMT to develop interpretive programming related to Missoula’s black history		X	

Immigrant Communities			
Contribute to existing downtown events, such as Germanfest and the International Culture and Food Festival, by developing exhibitions about the history of these Missoula communities		X	
Provide opportunities for immigrant communities to collaborate on pop-up exhibits related to their history, art, and culture	X		

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020–2023	Mid-Term 2023–2026	Long-Term 2026–2030
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Actions Related to Interpreting Many Perspectives and Underrepresented Heritage

Immigrant Communities (con'd)			
Identify interpretive opportunities to link Missoula’s immigrant communities to other facets of community life, such as arts, music, restaurants, and businesses		X	
Religious Congregations			
Identify opportunities to interpret all types of Missoula religious congregations		X	
Encourage collaboration on heritage programming among Missoula faith communities and consider the connections between the churches and other facets of Missoula’s heritage	X		
Collaborate with Downtown Missoula churches to offer special history and architectural walking tours		X	

Actions Related to Audience Experience

Wayfinding			
Install welcome archways as prescribed by the Downtown Master Plan			X
Consider how existing and future exterior interpretation in the wayfinding plan relates to the overall visitor experience and how it connects with the interpretive themes	X		

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020–2023	Mid-Term 2023–2026	Long-Term 2026–2030
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Actions Related to Audience Experience

Wayfinding (con'd)			
Complete implementation prescribed by Wayfinding Plan but use interpretive themes to guide content		X	
Integrate the Downtown Missoula Heritage Trail into the wayfinding system		X	

Unseen Missoula Pop-up Museum			
Consider naming the existing exhibit space the Unseen Missoula Museum	X		
Provide opportunities for partner entities to utilize the Museum	X		
Allow exhibitions to remain on a three-month rotating basis	X		
Build a recurring audience through regular special exhibitions	X		
Promote the exhibitions as part of First Friday art walks	X		
Based on audience reception and participation over time, make annual assessments of the museum space to ensure that it continues to meet the community needs		X	
If demand is sufficient, consider the viability of expansion into adjacent space, investing in improvements, or pursuing a different, more-versatile space		X	

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020–2023	Mid-Term 2023–2026	Long-Term 2026–2030
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Actions Related to Audience Experience

Heritage Tree Program			
Establish a heritage tree program for Downtown Missoula		X	
Develop recognition criteria and inventory eligible heritage trees on city property		X	
Develop a program for landowners to list their trees on a heritage tree registry		X	
Provide interpretive markers to identify heritage trees		X	
Produce a Missoula heritage tree guidebook to allow the public to better understand and connect with Missoula’s urban forest			X
Offer special events and tours hosted by urban forestry staff to commemorate heritage trees on Arbor Day or Earth Day			X

Fixed Interpretation			
Assess existing fixed media, such as kiosk and panels, to ensure that it is thematically appropriate for the intended audience experience		X	
Undertake a comprehensive inventory and review of all exterior interpretive signage		X	
Develop new interpretation to replace obsolete interpretation that attracts audiences and captures attention			X

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020-2023	Mid-Term 2023-2026	Long-Term 2026-2030
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Actions Related to Audience Experience

Fixed Interpretation (con'd)			
Produce interpretive text that is both concise and engaging, that facilitates personal connections to heritage resources			X
Develop and install additional interpretive signs related to the landscape			X
Collaborate with the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee to develop and install signage and place names relating to Salish lifeways along the Clark Fork River		X	
Develop fixed interpretation relating to underrepresented Missoula communities		X	
Develop fixed interpretation relating to underrepresented eras and topics		X	
Intergrate interpretation into the built environment, such as painting a highwater mark from the 1908 floods on a bridge or embedding poetry about the Clark Fork River on a riverside bench		X	

Heritage Entertainment			
Create a series of geocaches located at historic points of interest throughout Downtown and record them on geocaching.com. Each geocache should include interpretive text about heritage resources	X		
Collaborate with local taverns and breweries to host pub trivia focused on Missoula heritage	X		

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020-2023	Mid-Term 2023-2026	Long-Term 2026-2030
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Actions Related to Audience Experience

Heritage Entertainment (con'd)			
Organize a Missoula history story-telling series at downtown taverns, with each venue being the subject of that evening's stories		X	
Collaborate with Stories and Stones to offer special living history events in Downtown Missoula		X	
Use projection technology to project historic facades on contemporary buildings, or to screen a historic concert performances at music venues			X

Actions Related to Program Administration

Program Management			
Consider the feasibility of establishing a heritage program coordinator position or adding program management responsibility to an existing position		X	
Consider ways to delegate program management responsibility in order to maximize resources, create consistency among new interpretation, and reduce unnecessary administrative overlap		X	

Staff Training			
Facilitate staff review of existing tours and programs to consider themes, intended audiences, and desired audience experience	X		

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020-2023	Mid-Term 2023-2026	Long-Term 2026-2030
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Actions Related to Program Administration

Staff Training (con'd)			
Develop and implement additional interpretation training opportunities for Unseen Missoula staff and partners	X		
Develop interpretive training resources for use by Unseen Missoula staff and partners	X		

Actions Related to Scholarship

Collaborate with University of Montana faculty to provide opportunity for student-led heritage projects. This could involve public history, public art, filmmaking, drama, and many other areas of study	X		
Promote the availability of local research resources at the Missoula Public Library's Montana Room	X		
Provide links to online research resources on a dedicated Unseen Missoula website, or Missoula heritage website	X		
Encourage the collection of oral histories as part of heritage events		X	

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020-2023	Mid-Term 2023-2026	Long-Term 2026-2030
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Actions Related to Additional Interpretive Elements

Mobile Apps			
Assess the digital presence of Downtown Missoula heritage and ensure that adequate resources are available, and that mobile app presence supports the goals of the heritage interpretive plan	X		
Revise or replace existing mobile app tours to coordinate with stops along the proposed heritage trail		X	

Digital Kiosks			
Consider the feasibility of installing digital information kiosks at prominent downtown locations			X

Actions Related to Collaboration

University of Montana Partnerships			
Collaborate with University of Montana faculty to offer field school opportunities for students. Develop additional internship opportunities related to specific courses of study	X		
Collaborate with Art Department faculty to encourage arts, programming, and events related to Missoula heritage		X	
Partner with the Admissions Office to offer downtown heritage tours to prospective students	X		

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020–2023	Mid-Term 2023–2026	Long-Term 2026–2030
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Actions Related to Collaboration

University of Montana Partnerships (con'd)

Reach out to other academic departments (Education, Geography, Native American Studies, etc.) to identify ways to build partnerships	X		
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Tribal Cultural Entities and the Native American Community

Collaborate with the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee when developing interpretation related to Salish and Pend d'Oreille history and culture	X		
Collaborate with Missoula County Public Schools Indian Education Department to host community programming and events	X		
Collaborate with the American Indian Student Services and Kyiyo: Native American Student Association to provide opportunities for these organizations to host programming and events		X	
Partner with Missoula Urban Indian Health Center (MUIHC) on exhibits and events		X	

Media

Develop relationships with media outlets to promote Downtown Missoula heritage and to utilize available resources	X		
Promote local heritage stories produced by commercial media, such local television networks and <i>The Missoulian</i>	X		

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020–2023	Mid-Term 2023–2026	Long-Term 2026–2030
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Actions Related to Educators and Youth Outreach

Age Specific Programming			
Offer special Unseen Missoula activities and tours to summer camps	X		
Develop a Junior Ranger-style activity book		X	
Develop a Missoula Public Art scavenger hunt targeted at families		X	
Create Unseen Missoula geocaching collections featuring a variety of heritage sites.		X	

Develop Unseen Missoula Educator Materials			
Prepare an Unseen Missoula resource guide for teachers.			X
Create an advisory group of educators who already teach Downtown Missoula heritage topics and downtown heritage interpretation practitioners can consult with regarding development of new curriculum materials		X	
Integrate state and national curriculum standards into new materials			X
Work with educators to develop lesson plans and other curriculum-related materials		X	

RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ACTION	Short-Term 2020-2023	Mid-Term 2023-2026	Long-Term 2026-2030
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Actions Related to General Outreach and Marketing

Local and Regional Outreach			
Work with community organizations to promote new temporary exhibits, programming, and other special events	X		
Partner with local schools and cultural organizations	X		
Work with the Montana Historical Society to develop outreach strategies to market program offerings to heritage tourists elsewhere in Montana		X	
Identify and collaborate with cultural institutions that interpret Missoula Heritage	X		
Develop special programming for events, host rotating exhibits, and offer a variety of interpretive tours to ensure that heritage program offerings remain relevant to their local audience while adding value to the visitor experience		X	



The Unseen Missoula Pop-up Museum in the basement of the Hammond Arcade building. *Credit: Athena Photography*

Summary

Downtown Missoula is a community with a rich heritage, and it is a place defined by the intersection of natural and cultural landscapes. While Downtown Missoula’s heritage is tied to national and international events, the city’s unique attributes are many. Certainly, Missoula is full of big stories, but it is the lesser known stories that allow audiences to relate to this place and connect with its heritage.

It is the intention of the interpretive plan to identify opportunities to communicate Missoula’s stories and collective heritage in a

way to encourage audiences to make personal and emotional connections to Downtown Missoula. Developing focused programming, enhancing partnerships, and encouraging scholarship, will all contribute to downtown heritage interpretation that adds value to the overall downtown experience, while fostering civic pride. It is the hope of HRA and the Interpretive Planning Advisory Group that the comprehensive interpretive program presented in this plan will allow Missoula’s heritage to remain an essential part of Downtown Missoula’s identity as the downtown continues to evolve and prosper.

PART 4 PLANNING RESOURCES



The recently restored Florence Building lobby allows visitors to experience the look and feel of another era in Missoula history. *Credit: HRA*

HRA's Interpretive Planning Team

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Glossary

Implementation Plan: Divides the recommended actions in the interpretive plan into achievable short-, mid-, and long-term steps.

Interpretation: Defined by the National Association for Interpretation as “a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource.”

Interpretive Plan: A document that defines the overall vision and long-term interpretive goals of a historic site.

Interpretive Planning Process: According to the National Park Service, the process helps historic sites “consider ideas, makes choices, and set priorities about interpretation and education programming; it provides guidance to staff by clarifying objectives, identifying audiences, and recommending the best mix of media and personal services to use to convey themes.”

Select Interpretation Resources

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Rose, Julia. *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Fourth Edition. Bruce Craig, editor. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

U.S. Department of Arts and Culture. "Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call to Acknowledgement." Accessed September 12, 2019. <https://usdac.us/nativeland>.

Select Topical Resources

Non-Fiction

Arlee, Johnny, Robert Bigart, Pete Beaverhead, Rex C. Haight, and Tony Sandoval. *Over a Century of Moving to the Drum: Salish Indian Celebrations on the Flathead Indian Reservation*. Pablo, MT: Salish Kootenai College Press, 1998.

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