

# MISSOULA DOWNTOWN HERITAGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN



JANUARY 2020

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



In collaboration with the City of Missoula Historic Preservation Office and  
Downtown Missoula Partnership. Supported by a grant from the Montana  
Department of Commerce

***We acknowledge that we are in the homelands of the Salish and Kalispel people. We offer our respect for their history and culture, and for the path they have always shown us in caring for this place for the generations to come.***



The confluence of Rattlesnake Creek and the Clark Fork. In Salish it is known as *Niʔay* (or in long form, *Niʔayc̓c̓stm*), meaning Place of Small Bull Trout. This place-name is used by Salish speakers to refer to the city of Missoula as a whole. In the background is the mountain known in Salish as *Es Moq̓*, meaning It's a Mountain—akin to New Yorkers referring to their hometown simply as “the City.” Credit: *Séliš-Q̓ispé Culture Committee*

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# INTRODUCTION



A portion of "Heart of Missoula" completed in 2005 by Hadley Ferguson. *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, particularly during times of growth and master planning. Heritage interpretation is a major tenant of place-making and place-based planning. It fosters community investment, and

cultivates sociocultural ties to the community.

In the most fundamental sense, interpretive planning 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 part of the homelands of the Salish and upper Kalispel people, who lived here and continue to live here. It is 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 river and sits in the shadow of mountains. The valley walls bear the rippled reminders of cataclysmic glacial floods. Fire shaped its forests, just as the rivers have reshaped the valleys over centuries of geologic time. Missoula is the natural landscape.

**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.**

Missoula is its people. From time immemorial this valley has been a central part of the vast Salish and upper Kalispel territory that spanned the four directions on both sides of the Continental Divide. Other tribal peoples traversed the valley, including the Kootenai, lower Kalispel, Nez Perce, Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, and Blackfeet.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition passed through this natural thoroughfare and many others followed. Transportation developments led the United States to survey for a railroad here and negotiate the Hellgate Treaty with the Salish, upper Kalispel, and Kootenai, who agreed to cede portions of their lands, including the Missoula Valley, while reserving the right to continue to hunt, fish, and gather plants there.

Christopher P. Higgins and Francis Worden created the commercial foundation of the valley in 1860 when they established a trading post at Hell Gate--situated along the newly-built Mullan Road to serve the business of nearby Indian agencies. When Higgins and Worden moved their operation to the confluence of Rattlesnake Creek and the Clark Fork River, it was Higgins' upper Kalispel wife, Julia,



who is often credited with suggesting the new settlement take an anglicized version of its Salish place-name: Missoula.

Missoula grew into an economic hub of Western Montana while remaining a place of mixed ways of life: the tribal ways that had defined the region for millenia, and the nascent market system, further spurred by the gold rushes of the 1860s. The Mullan Road brought people and commerce into the valley, but it was the steel spines of the Northern Pacific that ignited an explosion of industrial activity. 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.

Economic expansion benefited some, but pushed tribal people and other racial and ethnic minorities to the margins. The development of the Garden City involved extremes of the human experience and everything in between, all rooted in Downtown Missoula.

Today, Downtown Missoula carries on traditions both old and new. The entrepreneurial spirit thrives with Saturday markets and in locally-owned businesses of all kinds, including its multitude of coffee shops, restaurants, breweries, and boutiques.

Missoula has long been a gathering place. The Salish and upper Kalispel 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 is also 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



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

Missoula Heritage Committee. The fruit of this effort appeared in the development of a downtown heritage program 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 committee assembled by the MDF (for a list of HRA's team and advisory committee participants, see Planning Resources). Over the course of the spring and summer of 2019, the advisory committee convened for planning meetings led by HRA's interpretive planners. As the process evolved, HRA's team personally contacted dozens



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



Missoula Downtown Heritage Interpretive Plan project area.

of community stakeholder organizations, individuals, and potential partners to provide an overview of the process and plan. It consulted with representatives from many organizations, including tribal consultation with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe’s Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee. Moreover, the interpretive planning committee hosted a public open house in April 2019 to share information on the plan and to solicit public feedback.

The interpretive planning committee 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 Downtown Missoula Partnership

maintained a website and online comment form specifically to obtain feedback on the interpretive plan.

All of these efforts were intended to include as many voices as possible that have been a part of Missoula’s heritage, including many that have too often been omitted, excluded, or overlooked. Collectively, the public voice informed the planning process and provided essential feedback. Altogether, the planning committee 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.

## 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 specific 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 interpretive text, design elements, or detailed locations directing where all interpretive media should be implemented.



Missoula public art. Credit: HRA

***“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 (UNESCO)**

PART 1  
**FOUNDATION**



Original stone foundation 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.

The following are **guiding principles** for the interpretive 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 and racially sensitive sites and issues and actively work to emphasize traditionally marginalized and excluded perspectives.
- Provide clear direction for implementation.
- Support the vision of the Downtown Master Plan and the major tenets of the City Growth Policy including Livability, Safety & Wellness, and Community Design.
- Produce a lasting impact.





The Missoula Marathon. *Credit: Athena Photography*

## Interpretive Goals

Interpretive goals are the primary things that Downtown Missoula interpretation should strive to accomplish.

- 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 underrepresented communities and their stories a voice to broaden the overall understanding of the many perspectives that converge here and the harsh realities that many faced.
- 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 to provide a tool to develop central, relevant ideas for the audience. Sub-themes and interpretive topics are tied to the overall theme and provide additional detail for developing interpretive opportunities. Collectively, the thematic framework presented in this plan is broad enough to tell an overall story of



Missoula Farmer's Market. *Credit: Getty Images*

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 in both programming and design should help link 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 and to fish the waters of the Clark Fork River and Rattlesnake Creek. 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 the mercantile and 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 rivers, 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 and speaks to its place within the traditional Salish and upper Kalispel territory. 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 the site of human history that spans millenia. 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
- Traditional use
- Salish leaders and influential community members
- Explorers and fur traders
- Settlers
- Hellgate Treaty
- 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 come together to 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 who have converged here, the places and events that have happened here, and ordinary and extraordinary things that distinguish it. It also connects Missoula to larger national and international trends, experiences, and events.



Missoula sunset. *Credit: Getty Images*

**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:**

- 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
- Recognition of displacement, exclusion, and racism
- Memory and experience through literature/art/music
- Personal stories
- Recognition of differences
- Celebration of diversity
- Connection through shared experiences

# 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 and speaks to its place within traditional Salish and upper Kalispel territory. 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 the site of human history that spans millenia. It is a hub of river valleys, a source of camas and bitterroot, and a trout-filled thoroughfare.</p>	<p>Investigate the geologic events that shaped the Missoula landscape</p> <p>Tell stories of Glacial Lake Missoula that once covered the entire Missoula Valley and left evidence of its presence imprinted on the landscape</p> <p>Tell how eastern and western prairies converge, creating unique grasslands</p> <p>Show how the mountains formed a natural thoroughfare where people passed through over many eras</p> <p>Investigate how the Missoula Valley provided for the Salish and upper Kalispel, including bitterroot and camas grounds and fishing locations</p> <p>Address human interactions with a changing climate from the ice age to global warming</p> <p>Describe the prominent role of the Clark Fork River in community life</p> <p>Identify the influential scholars and activists, including tribal elders and leaders, who made this place home</p> <p>Share the story of the origin of the name of Missoula being attributed to Julia Grant Higgins</p> <p>Discuss natural disasters and how they impacted the community</p> <p>Demonstrate how conservation efforts and urban restoration projects have impacted Downtown Missoula</p> <p>Describe Missoula’s geographic isolation and how it influenced community interactions</p>	<p>Climate history, ice age floods, glacial lake, fire</p> <p>Clark Fork/Columbia River</p> <p>Geology</p> <p>Ecology/plants</p> <p>Fish and wildlife</p> <p>Geography</p> <p>Native peoples</p> <p>Traditional use</p> <p>Salish leaders and influential community members</p> <p>Explorers and fur traders</p> <p>Hellgate Treaty</p> <p>Settlers</p> <p>Agriculture</p> <p>Water resources</p> <p>Flooding</p> <p>Exploitation of resources</p> <p>Isolation</p> <p>Regional urban center</p> <p>Environmental thought/ leadership</p> <p>Stewardship/conservation</p> <p>Forestry</p>

## THEME 2: Create and Exchange

THEME	CONCEPTS + IDEAS	TOPICS + STORIES
<p>Downtown Missoula is a place where people come together to 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>Identify opportunities to interpret trading and cultural exchange among Indigenous peoples</p> <p>Discuss fur trade activities that took place near Missoula</p> <p>Tell about the establishment of Missoula Mills and the polyethnic community that took shape at that time</p> <p>Discuss the importance of the Missoula Mercantile and its role as the commercial heart of the city for more than a century</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 Missoula</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>Support new and existing Native American cultural heritage events, such as the Missoula Indigenous Market and the Indigenous Celebration hosted by the Missoula PaddleHeads.</p> <p>Expand and utilize the Legacy Business Recognition Program to include tours, maps, tax incentives and more</p> <p>Discuss how transportation development, such as the Mullan Road, railroads, bridges, trolleys, and cars influenced community life</p>	<p>Making and trading from time immemorial to the present</p> <p>Creating with local materials</p> <p>Artisans</p> <p>Mills</p> <p>Art</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 who have converged here, the places and events that have happened here, and ordinary and extraordinary things that distinguish it. It also connects Missoula to larger national and international trends, experiences, and events.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee to develop interpretive signs and place name markers</p> <p>Integrated public art focusing on Salish and upper Kalispel life in the Missoula Valley and produced by Salish and upper Kalispel artists</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 25th Infantry, 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 athletic events to fly fishing to marathon running</p> <p>Identify opportunities to embed Missoula poetry into landscape architecture</p> <p>Describe the importance of Missoula as bitterroot digging grounds, with encampments there into the 1960s when development forced tribal people elsewhere</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>Transportation</p> <p>Immigrants</p> <p>Ethnic groups</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>Acknowledge and recognize Salish displacement including the Hellgate Treaty and Chief Charlo’s removal from the Bitterroot Valley</p> <p>Host Missoula heritage story-telling 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 at downtown venues, including the Missoula Senior Center</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 early Chinese community</p> <p>Acknowledge the exclusionary practices and racism that has occurred throughout Missoula’s history, as well as efforts to combat those forces</p> <p>Identify opportunities to interpret the history and Missoula experience of various immigrant communities over time</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, Missoula IDEA for Racial Justice, and Together Missoula to identify opportunities to celebrate the heritage of underrepresented populations in Missoula</p> <p>Explore the representation of Missoula memories through art and literature</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>Recognition of displacement, exclusion, and racism</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>





International Choral Festival. Credit: Benson Media

## 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, bicycle, and bus, with downtown serving as the city's central transit hub.

### 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 Missoula 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
- Encounter interpretation that is both welcoming and accessible to audiences of diverse backgrounds and abilities
- 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, made it home, and still make it 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 how 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
- Learn about the history and architecture of Downtown Missoula's historic buildings

### Reflective

- 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 Indigenous people, settlers, and everyday people
- Make connections between Missoula and other regional locations and landscapes
- Make personal connections to Missoula and consider your downtown memories
- Recognize the value of historic preservation

## 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 and new development 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.

This plan also recommends celebrating and interpreting our communal spaces that are part of everyday landscapes. This includes industrial ruins and hole-in-the-walls -- the places that are so familiar to our community that they can be easily overlooked.

### 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.

## PART 2

# EXISTING CONDITIONS



Missoula Art Museum, located in Missoula's historic Carnegie library, 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, there is a lack of interpretive elements that present the voices of Indigenous people and other people of color. Moreover, 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 does the Downtown Missoula Partnership, Destination Missoula , and 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, Families First Learning Lab, Boone and Crockett Club, and the Montana Museum of Natural History.

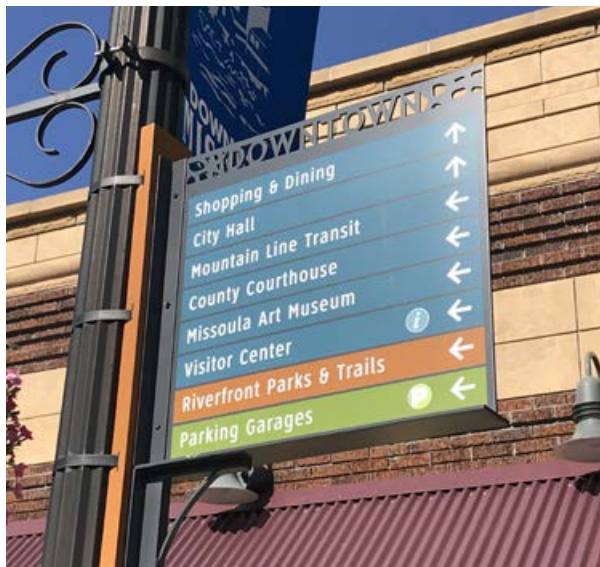
Some businesses exemplify historic preservation and adaptive reuse, while others feature historic artifacts, collections, and interpretive exhibitions. The Florence Building, The Wilma, Top Hat, Charlie B’s, The Oxford, and the Missoula Club are a few of the many downtown locations that contribute to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

are legacy businesses, which evoke personal memories and speak to the shared experience of generations of Missoulians.

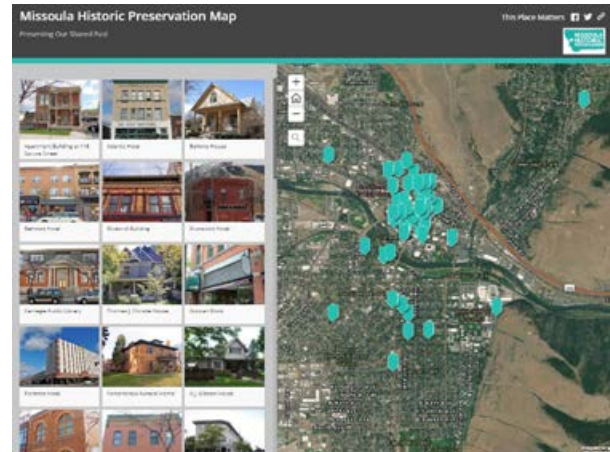
## Information and Orientation

### 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, “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, a shopping and dining guide, information on experiencing Downtown Missoula, 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 popular social media platforms.

### ● Mobile Apps

HRA produced several downtown digital walking tours using the Next Exit History mobile app platform. 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 Missoula 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 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

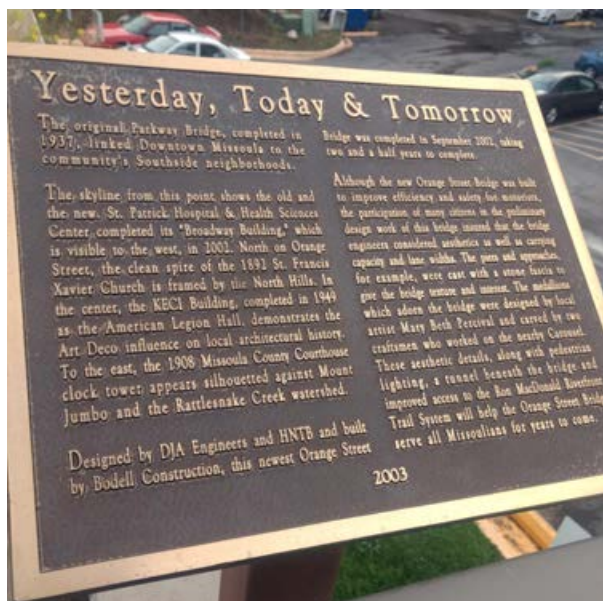
*The Missoulian* publishes original feature stories based on Missoula’s heritage. These stories provide one of the most accessible ways to communicate Missoula’s heritage. In addition, the *Missoula Current* online newspaper includes a regular column focused on local history. Local television media also 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. The City of Missoula's Public Art Committee commissioned much of

the downtown public art. 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 filled a void for downtown exhibition space by hosting temporary exhibitions.

The Missoula Art Museum hosts 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) also hosts 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 new library facility opens 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 are a regular downtown activity.

## Unseen Missoula Tours

Unseen Missoula has offered three separate programs since its debut in 2018. 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, clubs, fraternal organizations, and municipal entities have worked together for decades to develop heritage events and programming.

For the purposes of this plan, partners are defined as entities that offer interpretation or are involved in heritage events or programming and, therefore, have a distinct interest in the interpretive plan. Ultimately it will be the partners who implement the plan.

Below is a partial list of 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 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 taxidermy specimens and exhibitions related to club history.

## **A Carousel for Missoula**

A Carousel for Missoula is one of the city's premier cultural attractions. Located adjacent to Caras Park and originally developed by a collection of dedicated volunteers, the hand-carved carousel features individual ponies that are each a unique reflection of Missoula's heritage. Besides the intricately carved carousel, the facility houses exhibits on its history and is home to the Dragon Hollow playground.

## **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 May Preservation Month activities, collaboration with the Unseen Missoula program, exhibitions at the Pop-up Museum, local and national register historic properties, the Legacy Business Recognition Program, and an assortment of other programs and events. The office is also staff to 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**

Missoula 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, including after-school activities and 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 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 Downtown Missoula Partnership (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



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

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, operates Caras Park, offers weekly Out-to-Lunch and Downtown ToNight events and seasonal and special events, among other things.

### **EmpowerMT**

EmpowerMT is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a more just and inclusive society and, as such, offers workshops, programming, and training for schools, businesses, and the community-at-large. It also organizes two signature heritage events, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Diversity Day, that examine civil rights issues both locally and nationally. It also serves as parent organization to Missoula's IDEA for Racial Justice.

### **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.

## **Jeannette Rankin Peace Center**

The Jeannette Rankin Peace Center, in the tradition of its namesake, is dedicated to connecting and empowering people to “build a socially just, non-violent and sustainable community and world.” As such, it maintains a lending library and offers a variety of community events and programming.

## **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 historic Carnegie Library building, the Missoula Art Museum rotates

approximately twenty to twenty-five exhibitions through six galleries, with many shows celebrating Missoula’s heritage and arts tradition. It also hosts an assortment of interpretive programs for school groups and the public-at-large.

## **Missoula County**

Missoula County government administers heritage assets throughout the county, including Downtown Missoula heritage assets on the Missoula County Courthouse property. The historic county courthouse houses a collection of Edgar Paxson murals, the Missoula World War I Doughboy statue, and interpretation installed in the Sophie Moise Room. Missoula County also facilitates the Missoula County Heritage Roundtable where it brings together representatives from various heritage organizations to encourage dialogue and collaboration.

## **Missoula Public Library**

Opening in 2020, the new Missoula Public Library is dedicated to serving as a “life-long learning hub” for Missoula County. The facility will house several heritage partner organizations and will continue to provide learning tools and resources. The library also offers regular heritage programming and has space to host special events.

## **Missoula Senior Center**

The Missoula Senior Center, located on the Hip Strip, offers programs and services that support the health and well-being of Missoula’s 55 and

older population. The Center has the capacity to collaborate with many community partners in support of Downtown Missoula heritage programs, such as storytelling and interpretive displays

### **Missoula Urban Indian Health Center**

The Missoula Urban Indian Health Center (MUIHC) is involved with a variety of heritage initiatives with past collaborations including 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 Indigenous heritage events in partnership with the Missoula PaddleHeads (Osprey) baseball team and an Indigenous Art Market.

### **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. Plans are currently underway to build the Montana Heritage Pavilion on the University of Montana campus to serve as the MMAC's permanent home. The new museum presents opportunity for collaboration and partnership on Downtown Missoula heritage programming.

### **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.



A Carousel for Missoula. Credit: HRA

## **Public Art Committee**

The Public Art Committee is a municipal committee whose members appointed by the mayor or city council. It is responsible for overseeing the city’s public art program. Among its many initiatives is the “Art Revolution” City of Missoula public art guide, which it publishes in collaboration with the Missoulian.

## **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 administering Missoula’s Most Endangered Places List.

## **Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History**

The Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History’s mission extends well outside of Missoula, but it also serves as an important resource for military and veterans’ 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.

## **Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee**

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe’s Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee organizes traditional tribal cultural events and activities, works to preserve and revitalize the Salish language, maintains the tribe’s History & Culture Archives, Photographic Archives, and Historical Collections, and oversees Tribal History and Ethnogeography Projects. It also offer public educational outreach and presentations and has produced a variety of interpretive signs and documentary videos.

## **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 Missoula 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. There is also a section recommending the entity, or entities, responsible for leading major initiatives. This part 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 should communicate messages that are part of a thematically linked information network 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 Missoula lacks an established visitor center or a history museum, it has a number of community resources that are ideally positioned to anchor downtown heritage interpretation. They each occupy a distinct section of Downtown Missoula, making them logical places from which to initiate interpretive experiences. These heritage interpretation anchors should be identified in the city's wayfinding system and in supporting interpretive media.

- 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 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 the “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. Each gateway should be equipped with interpretive kiosks welcoming audiences downtown, while leading audiences to heritage resources beyond.

- 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.



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

- University of Montana/Riverbowl/Kim Williams Trail is a gateway to both the Hellgate Canyon and the University of Montana. The footpaths converging along 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, Rochester (NY) Heritage Trail, and Cincinnati Brewing Heritage Trail. Heritage trails differ from published walking tours alone in that they lead audiences with physical guidance such as sidewalk lines, 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, specifically at heritage interpretation gateways. The sign design should be modified to include a map of the heritage trail. An interactive digital kiosk should be considered along 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 designed by a local artist.
- 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 and sidewalks are redeveloped.
- Each of the Heritage Interpretation Anchors (identified above) should be included in the trail and offer a point of orientation and 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.
- Partner with businesses located in historic buildings and create a history walk associated with special events, such as First Friday or Ladies Night, with each business displaying historic photographs of what the buildings looked like at various points in time.

## **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 Missoula 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 Missoula there are spaces that could host temporary exhibitions relating to its 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, all while revitalizing dormant spaces.

## **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 and upper Kalispel interpretation along the riverfront, including Salish language place names and interpretive signs. This heritage interpretive plan supports the master plan’s recommendation of incorporating design elements and historical and cultural content developed in collaboration with the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee into Downtown Missoula public art and interpretation.

## **Big Art**

The Downtown Master Plan calls for commissioning large-scale public art. This includes murals covering dormant and monolithic walls throughout downtown, activating alley ways for heritage interpretation, and creating centerpiece art installations that distinguish under-utilized spaces.

## **Canvasses for Native American Art by Indigenous Artists**

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



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

recognize Missoula's Indigenous peoples.

## Interpretation to Support Other 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 become difficult to lead traffic to the preferred source of information. Heritage partners should develop a robust online presence to

attract audiences and provide a central place where potential audiences can locate heritage resources.

## Unseen Missoula and Missoula Heritage Online Presence

The following actions are recommended for the Unseen Missoula site maintained by DMP, <https://www.missouladowntown.com/tours/unseen-missoula/> or, if deemed beneficial, a more expansive Missoula heritage website.

- Create a distinct URL and establish an independent website for Missoula heritage resources and Unseen Missoula. This should serve as a singular platform to share information on all of Missoula's heritage-related digital content.
- Perform routine maintenance and regularly assess content to ensure that the online presence remains a relevant and functional resource.
- Feature a selection of 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, links to Sanborn maps, and video clips; partner with schools and educators to develop the lesson plans.
- Provide information about upcoming programs and events, maintain the Unseen Missoula sign-up infrastructure, and include links to partner 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 Missoula heritage partners to develop and share content.

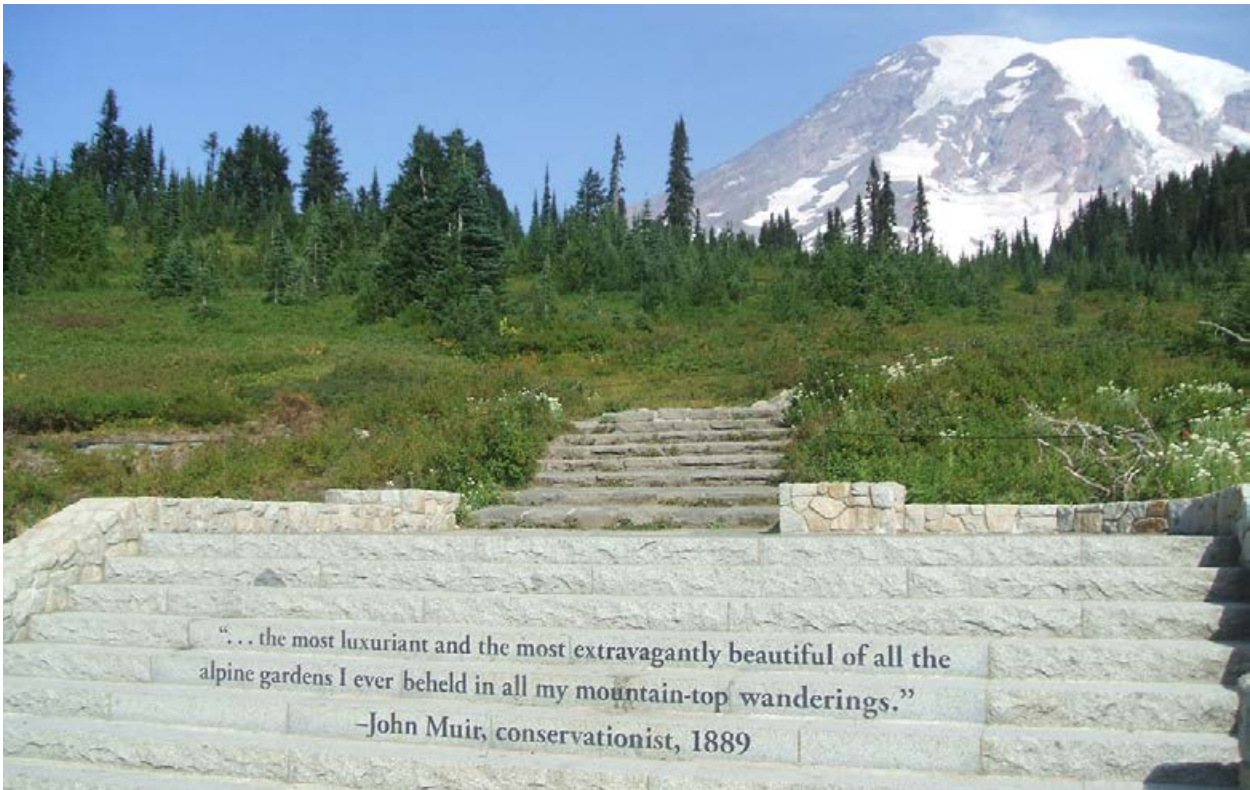


The rainbow crosswalk adjacent to the Missoula Art Park uses public art to demonstrate inclusivity. *Credit: HRA*

## 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 Indigenous peoples, as well as Missoula's settlement and the experiences of its many 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,





Quote integrated into landscape. *Credit: NPS*

comprehensive, and inclusive interpretation there.

## Indigenous Heritage

Missoula is part of the traditional homelands of the Salish and upper Kalispel people. Over the centuries other Indigenous groups visited 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. Importantly,

implementation of Indigenous heritage initiatives should be done through direct collaboration with Native American community organizations and tribal consultation.

- Consider ways to integrate Native American heritage into other topics, such as military history, arts, music, literature, poetry, and transportation.
- Highlight Native American heritage through public art by commissioning Indigenous artists to produce work.
- Develop interpretive signs in collaboration with the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee and provide opportunities to incorporate place-names as part of the Séliš-Qlispé Ethnogeographic Signs Initiative into Downtown Missoula.
- Honor Missoula's Indigenous people, particularly the Salish and upper Kalispel, through land acknowledgment at public events.

**According to “Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call to Acknowledgment,” prepared by the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, “Acknowledgment 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)**

- Incorporate view overlays with historical photographs at riverfront sites.
- Identify an opportunities to recognize Missoula as Salish and upper Kalispel homelands and their contributions to Missoula heritage by collaborating with the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee in the naming of a major public works project or in the renaming of existing infrastructure.
- Collaborate with the Missoula Urban Indian Health Center in the development of interpretation, programming, and events and identify ways to support their existing programming and events.

## 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 and public art 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.
- Collaborate with the University of Montana Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies Department to host public events downtown.

## 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. Missoula’s black history should be interpreted on its own and within other topics, such as military history and the arts and should directly address both the exceptional stories, such as the bicycle corps, but also the difficult realities of exclusion and racism that African American community members encountered.

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, Belorussian, 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.



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

- Provide opportunities for immigrant communities to collaborate on pop-up exhibitions related to their history, art, and culture.
- 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 recommended by the Downtown Master Plan.
- Assess 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 and install fixed interpretation in the vicinity of heritage interpretation anchors.

## 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. The space also provided a venue for several special exhibitions. The availability of a dedicated heritage 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 exhibitions located downtown.
- Secure a permanent space to for the Unseen Missoula Museum, whether in the Hammond Arcade or elsewhere.
- Provide opportunities for partner entities to utilize the Unseen Missoula Museum to promote their organizations and ensure that the heritage program has regular sources of interpretive content.
- Allow exhibitions to remain on a rotating basis, depending on seasonal considerations and competing events.
- Build a recurring audience through regular special exhibitions.
- Promote 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.

## **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 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 Parks and Recreation staff to commemorate heritage trees on Arbor Day or Earth Day.

## **Fixed Interpretation**

Fixed interpretive media is an important component of downtown heritage interpretation. Interpretive media requires a substantial investment and should be developed with clear goals and messages in mind. Consideration should also be given to the overall audience experience by using cohesive design elements and thematic language that connect it to other interpretive elements.

- Undertake a comprehensive review and inventory of all exterior interpretive signage to identify worn or obsolete signs and replace them with new interpretive media.
- Assess existing fixed media, such as kiosks and panels, to ensure that it is thematically appropriate, is designed with interpretive goals in mind, and is appropriate for the desired audience experience.
- Develop new interpretation that attracts audiences and captures attention.
- Produce interpretive text that is both concise and engaging and 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 Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee to develop and install signage and place names relating to Salish and



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 Fort Missoula Regional Park (shown) and Milltown State Park, the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers, are examples of collaboration with the Séliš-Qlišpé Culture Committee. *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*

upper Kalispel lifeways along the Clark Fork River.

- Develop fixed interpretation relating to underrepresented Missoula communities, including the LGBTQ community, ethnic, and religious groups.
- Develop fixed interpretation relating to many different eras and topics.
- Integrate interpretation into the built environment, such as painting a high-water mark from the 1908 floods on a

bridge, or embedding poetry on a riverside bench.

- Develop a City of Missoula flag that is representative of the community's heritage.

## 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.

- Develop and implement standards for programs 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.
- Partner with other organizations, such as Pedal Missoula or the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee to offer special tours.

## **Heritage Entertainment**

Interpretive programming can not only be meaningful, but it can also be entertaining. Heritage entertainment should be presented in

a many formats as a means to appeal to a variety of local and visiting audiences.

- 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 and breweries to host pub 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.
- Project historic facades on contemporary buildings, or screen historic concert performances at current and former music venues.

## **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.



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

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 could exist within one of several possible downtown entities. If housed within the City of Missoula Historic Preservation Office, the position could serve both

heritage interpretation and assist historic preservation office responsibilities.

- 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, film-making, 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 multiples languages and can provide audio content for visually impaired audiences and alternative 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, they are easily identified by audiences, 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 to developing and maintaining an impactful heritage program.

## University of Montana Partnerships

- Collaborate with academic departments including the College of Education, Environmental Studies, International Relations, Native American Studies, History, African-American Studies, Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies, and Geography to identify ways to build partnerships.
- Work with 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.

## Tribal Governments, Tribal Cultural Entities, and Native American Community Organizations

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

- Collaborate with the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee when developing

interpretation related to their 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.
- Collaborate with the University of Montana Native American Studies Department on the development of interpretive media and programming.
- Partner with Missoula Urban Indian Health Center on new exhibits and events and support their existing heritage events, such as the Indigenous Film Festival and Indigenous Art Market.

## 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



A crowd gathers along Higgins Avenue for an Unseen Missoula event. *Credit: Athena Photography*

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 can support development of 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 can expose new audiences to Downtown Missoula heritage and will make heritage more accessible to existing audiences.

### 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	<b>X</b>		
Designate heritage gateways	<b>X</b>		
Develop a downtown heritage trail	<b>X</b>		

### Actions Related to Special Events

Integrate heritage interpretation into existing special events	<b>X</b>		
Develop subject-related pop-up exhibitions	<b>X</b>		
Encourage the production of Missoula heritage-related documentaries		<b>X</b>	
Partner with local businesses to create a history walk as part of special events.		<b>X</b>	

### Actions Related to the Missoula Downtown Master Plan

Develop pop-up exhibitions	<b>X</b>		
Caras Park and bridge improvements		<b>X</b>	
Canvasses for Native American Art by local Indigenous artists	<b>X</b>		
Big Art		<b>X</b>	

# 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	

Downtown Heritage Social Media			
Support and expand current social media presence	X		

## 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, and transportation.	X		
Highlight Native American heritage through public art by commissioning Indigenous artists to produce work.	X		
Honor Missoula's Indigenous people, particularly the Salish and upper Kalispel, through land acknowledgment	X		
Incorporate view overlays with historical photographs at riverfront sites		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 (con'd)			
Develop interpretive signs in collaboration with the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee and provide opportunities to incorporate the Séliš-Qlispé Ethnogeographic Signs Initiative into Downtown Missoula.		X	
Recognize Missoula as Salish and upper Kalispel homelands and their contribution to Missoula heritage by collaborating with the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee in the naming of a major public works project.		X	
Collaborate with the Missoula Urban Indian Health Center in the development of interpretation, programming, and events and identify ways to support their existing programming and events.	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	
Collaborate with the University of Montana Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies Department to host public events downtown.		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		
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### 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

Incorporate heritage interpretation into existing downtown events, such as Germanfest and the International Culture and Food Day, 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 recommended by the Downtown Master Plan			X
Asses 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 the Wayfinding Plan but use interpretive themes to guide content		X	
Integrate the Downtown Missoula Heritage Trail into the wayfinding system and install fixed interpretation in the vicinity of heritage interpretation anchors		X	

Unseen Missoula Pop-up Museum			
Consider naming the existing exhibit space the Unseen Missoula Museum	X		
Secure a permanent space to for the Unseen Missoula Museum, whether in the Hammond Arcade or elsewhere.	X		
Allow exhibitions to remain on a 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 community needs		X	
Provide opportunities for partner entities to utilize the museum	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

<b>Heritage Tree Program</b>			
Establish a heritage tree program for Downtown Missoula		X	
Develop recognition criteria and inventory eligible heritage trees		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 Parks and Recreation staff to commemorate heritage trees on Arbor Day or Earth Day		X	

<b>Fixed Interpretation</b>			
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 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 and facilitates personal connections to heritage resources			X
Develop and install additional interpretive signs related to the landscape			X
Collaborate with the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee to develop and install signage and place names relating to Salish and upper Kalispel lifeways along the Clark Fork River		X	
Develop fixed interpretation relating to underrepresented Missoula communities		X	
Develop fixed interpretation relating to many different eras and topics		X	
Integrate interpretation into the built environment, such as painting a high-water mark from the 1908 floods on a bridge or embedding poetry on a riverside bench		X	
Use consistent design language derived from the interpretive themes to build cohesion among new interpretive media.		X	
Develop a City of Missoula flag that is representative of the community's 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			
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		
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	
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	

# 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			
Facilitate staff review of existing tours and programs to consider themes, intended audiences, and desired audience experience	<b>X</b>		
Develop and implement additional interpretation training opportunities for Unseen Missoula staff and partners	<b>X</b>		
Develop interpretive training resources for use by Unseen Missoula staff and partners	<b>X</b>		

## 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, film-making, drama, and many other areas of study	<b>X</b>		
Promote the availability of local research resources at the Missoula Public Library's Montana Room	<b>X</b>		
Provide links to online research resources on a dedicated Unseen Missoula website, or Missoula heritage website	<b>X</b>		
Encourage the collection of oral histories as part of heritage events		<b>X</b>	

## 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 academic departments to identify ways to build partnerships	X		
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### Tribal Cultural Entities and the Native American Community

Collaborate with the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee when developing interpretation related to their 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 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 the <i>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 that can support the 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

### Actions Related to General Outreach and Marketing

Local and Regional Outreach			
Partner with local schools and cultural organizations	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 (con'd)			
Work with community organizations to promote new temporary exhibits, programming, and other special events	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	

## Lead Implementation Entities

All entities and organizations involved in Downtown Missoula heritage interpretation, including potential partners, should find direction and inspiration from the recommendations in this plan. However, some of the recommended initiatives require a lead entity responsible for shepherding it forward. The following list identifies one, or more, entities that are best positioned to assume responsibility for such initiatives.

Action	Responsible Entity/Entities
Downtown Heritage Trail	Downtown Missoula Partnership (DMP)
Pop-up Exhibitions	Historic Preservation Office (HPO)/Historic Preservation Commission
Caras Park Improvements	Parks and Recreation/DMP
Pre-Visit/Distance	DMP/Destination Missoula
Heritage Tree Program	Parks and Recreation/HPO
Fixed Interpretation	HPO/ Parks and Recreation/DMP
Murals and Public Art	Public Art Committee



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 Committee 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*

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Barb Neilan, Destination Missoula

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Courtney LeBlanc, Missoula Public Art Committee

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Matt Lautzenheiser, Historical Museum at Fort Missoula

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## Acknowledgments

HRA and the project team extend our gratitude to the Montana Department of Commerce for supporting this project and all of the individuals and organizations who took the time to speak to us. Thank you to the members of the MDF Board of Directors who personally supported this effort every step of the way. And a special thanks to the volunteers who served on the interpretive planning advisory committee for their work guiding this effort throughout the process.

## Definitions

**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 site.

## Select Interpretation Resources

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