



Rendering of potential future Freedom Trail Festival street fair.

## V. MANAGING THE HERITAGE AREA

### Organizational Structure

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

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

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

- William Bradberry, President
- Denise Easterling, Vice President
- Thomas DeSantis, Secretary
- Ken Wagner, Treasurer



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

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

### Management Capabilities

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

- Accepting and disbursing funds: Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. will be the recipient of revenues generated by Heritage Area activities, as well as grant funds and financing associated with those activities. It is expected that these funds will be documented consistent with periodic nonprofit reporting responsibilities.
- Acquire, improve, and dispose of property: This organization will be the sole entity authorized to acquire, improve, and dispose of property on behalf of the Heritage Area.
- Manage, operate, and maintain facilities: Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. will be responsible for the use and care of all facilities, including but not limited to the Interpretive Center.

Insofar as Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission, Inc. may be called upon to make recommendations to public agencies seeking comment on land use decisions regarding historic preservation and the Underground Railroad, it is appropriate

to do so in keeping with the goals presented throughout this Plan. The organization itself has not been granted any authority over land use issues; however, it is expected to play some role in ensuring that the preservation criteria and standards it identifies are maintained for those properties which it nominates for formal historic site designation.

