



Restored U.S. Customs House hosting future event.

## VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Table 11 demonstrates how each recommendation responds to the series of goals presented in Chapter I, and suggests a basic time frame within which outcomes may be

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



VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

HERITAGE AREA GOALS (SEE ALSO PAGE 7)

Table 11: Summary of Goals and Recommendations

	Management Plan Recommendations	Historic Preservation			Interpretation and education		
		1a.	1b.	1c.	2a.	2b.	2c.
SHORT-TERM (0-3 YEARS)	1. Develop and operate the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center.		X	X	X		
	2. Apply for grant funding and finance programs as appropriate for specific Heritage Area initiatives.	X		X	X	X	
	3. Pursue membership within appropriate and related institutional organizations.	X					
	4. Coordinate the design, development, and marketing of an Underground Railroad Walking Tour.		X	X	X	X	
	5. Promote the development of well-designed locational markers for significant historical sites within the Heritage Area.		X	X			
	6. While facilitating the development and management of the Underground Railroad Heritage Area, coordinate, where practicable, walking trails, events, marketing efforts etc., with other local destinations and/or heritage attractions.			X			
	7. Coordinate with educational institutions for the development of a local research symposium on the Underground Railroad.	X			X		X
	8. Ensure the development of marketing and outreach materials to accommodate various audiences and multiple media platforms.			X		X	

1a. Support and conduct exceptional research on the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement as well as other related topics.

1b. Identify, designate, and preserve important sites, artifacts, oral and written histories, and landscapes related to the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in the City of Niagara Falls.

1c. Develop resource driven strategies for preserving our city's unique story, and sharing it with the world.

2a. Educate the community about their shared heritage regarding local participation in the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement.

2b. Support the development of curriculum and outreach programs to educate children about the local history on the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement.

2c. Collaborate with local educational institutions to develop programs related to the topics of the Underground Railroad and heritage tourism.



HERITAGE AREA GOALS (SEE ALSO PAGE 7)

- 2d. Communicate the past stories of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist values of liberty and freedom to the people experienced today and can have a positive influence on the treatment of these values in the future.
- 2e. Develop events that celebrate the exceptional quality of character exercised by those involved in the fight for freedom and liberty.
- 3a. Develop interactive experiences throughout the Heritage Area that appeal to all ages.
- 3b. Consider including in all programs and special events specific elements that appeal to the tourist primarily interested in recreational activity.
- 3c. Include healthy and active transportation alternatives through the Heritage Area.
- 4a. Capitalize on the existing transportation and cultural institutions in Niagara Falls region.
- 4b. Strengthen connections with the hospitality industry and cultural institutions in Niagara Falls.
- 4c. Strengthen the heritage tourism programs that specifically address the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls.
- 4d. Collaborate with the other local and regional institutions and agencies in the development of experiences for heritage travelers, students, and scholars with multiple interests.
- 4e. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.
- 4f. Support quality installations, amenities, and experiences to encourage return visits to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area.
- 4g. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.

Interp. and edu. cont.		Recreation			Economic revitalization through heritage tourism							
X		X	X		X					X	X	
					X	X	X	X				
X		X	X	X			X			X	X	
		X			X				X	X	X	
		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
									X			
		X	X		X	X	X	X	X			



VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

HERITAGE AREA GOALS (SEE ALSO PAGE 7)

Table 11: Summary of Goals and Recommendations cont.

LONG-TERM (3-7 YEARS)	Management Plan Recommendations	Historic Preservation			Interpretation and education		
		1a.	1b.	1c.	2a.	2b.	2c.
	1. Build upon and enhance the existing Freedom Trail Festival.			X	X	X	X
	2. Partner with local organizations to develop an annual public lecture series on the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and other related topics.			X	X	X	X
	3. Support the creation of an appropriately placed mural (or murals) celebrating the City's Underground Railroad heritage.		X	X	X		
	4. Support the development of interpretive statuaries to be located at one or more significant historic sites.		X	X	X		
	5. Support the development of Underground Railroad heritage curriculum and related field trip activities.			X	X	X	X
	6. Promote multiple modes of transportation at high-visitation areas, and capitalize on alternative transportation or public transit options where possible.						

**1a.** Support and conduct exceptional research on the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement as well as other related topics.

**1b.** Identify, designate, and preserve important sites, artifacts, oral and written histories, and landscapes related to the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in the City of Niagara Falls.

**1c.** Develop resource driven strategies for preserving our city's unique story, and sharing it with the world.

**2a.** Educate the community about their shared heritage regarding local participation in the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement.

**2b.** Support the development of curriculum and outreach programs to educate children about local history on the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement.

**2c.** Collaborate with local educational institutions to develop programs related to the topics of the Underground Railroad and heritage tourism.



HERITAGE AREA GOALS (SEE ALSO PAGE 7)

- 2d. Communicate that the past stories of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist values of liberty and freedom as they are experienced today and can have a positive influence on the treatment of these values in the future.
- 2e. Develop events that celebrate the exceptional quality of character exercised by those involved in the fight for freedom and liberty.
- 3a. Develop interactive experiences throughout the Heritage Area that appeal to all ages.
- 3b. Consider including in all programs and special events specific elements that appeal to the tourist primarily interested in recreational activity.
- 3c. Include healthy and active transportation alternatives through the Heritage Area.
- 4a. Capitalize on the existing tourist and special Niagara Falls region.
- 4b. Strengthen connections with the hospitality industry and cultural institutions in Niagara Falls.
- 4c. Strengthen the heritage tourism programs that specifically address the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls.
- 4d. Collaborate with the other local and regional institutions and agencies in the development of experiences for heritage travelers, students, and scholars with multiple interests.
- 4e. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.
- 4f. Support quality installations, amenities, and experiences to encourage return visits to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area.
- 4g. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings.

Interp. and edu. cont.		Recreation			Economic revitalization through heritage tourism						
	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	
X	X	X			X						
X					X			X		X	X
X		X			X			X		X	X
X	X	X	X				X		X	X	
		X	X	X	X			X		X	X



VI. SUMMARY OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

HERITAGE AREA GOALS (SEE ALSO PAGE 7)

Table 11: Summary of Goals and Recommendations cont.

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

**1a.** Support and conduct exceptional research on the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement as well as other related topics.

**1b.** Identify, designate, and preserve important sites, artifacts, oral and written histories, and landscapes related to the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in the City of Niagara Falls.

**1c.** Develop resource driven strategies for preserving our city's unique story, and sharing it with the world.

**2a.** Educate the community about their shared heritage regarding local participation in the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement.

**2b.** Support the development of curriculum and outreach programs to educate children about local history on the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement.

**2c.** Collaborate with local educational institutions to develop programs related to the topics of the Underground Railroad and heritage tourism.



HERITAGE AREA GOALS (SEE ALSO PAGE 7)

- 2d. Communicate that the past stories of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist values of liberty and freedom as they are experienced today and can have a positive influence on the treatment of these values in the future.
- 2e. Develop events that celebrate the exceptional quality of character exercised by those involved in the fight for freedom and liberty.
- 3a. Develop interactive experiences throughout the Heritage Area that appeal to all ages.
- 3b. Consider including in all programs and special events specific elements that appeal to the tourist primarily interested in recreational activity.
- 3c. Include healthy and active transportation alternatives through the Heritage Area.
- 4a. Capitalize on the existing transportation and cultural institutions in Niagara Falls.
- 4b. Strengthen connections with the hospitality industry specifically address the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movement in Niagara Falls.
- 4c. Collaborate with the other local and regional institutions and agencies in the development of experiences for heritage travelers, students, and scholars with multiple interests.
- 4e. Strengthen connections with cultural and natural heritage sites throughout the Niagara Falls region.
- 4f. Support quality installations, amenities, and experiences to encourage return visits to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area.
- 4g. Support the improvement of the physical conditions of key historical sites and their surroundings

Interp. and edu. cont.		Recreation			Economic revitalization through heritage tourism							
			X		X	X	X	X				X
				X		X	X	X				X
								X		X		X
					X			X	X	X		
X							X					
								X		X		X
								X		X		X
						X		X				



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

**Short-term (0-3 Years):**

**1. Develop and operate the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center.**

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

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

*Reference page:* 67

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

*Associated action step:* Identify and prioritize specific projects/initiatives within the Heritage Area.

*Associated action step:* Identify funding sources that match these priority projects/initiatives, learn the relevant grant cycle

and coordinate grant applications.

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

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

*Reference page:* 112

**3. Pursue membership within appropriate and related institutional organizations.**

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

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

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

*Potential institutional partner(s):* See “Marketing the Heritage Area: Institutional collaboration”

*Reference page:* 120

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

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

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

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

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

*Reference page:* 73

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

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

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

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

*Reference page:* 68





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

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

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

*Reference page:* 116

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

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

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

*Reference page:* 80

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Reference page:* 121

*Long-term (3-7 Years):*

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

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

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

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

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

*Reference page:* 73

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

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

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

*Reference page:* 80



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

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

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

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

*Reference page:* 72

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

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

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

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

*Reference page:* 70

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

*Associated action step:* Coordinate the development of an annual one day

Underground Railroad story telling event for local schools.

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

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

*Associated action step:* Develop an internship program available to all higher education students in support of the Commission’s mission, vision, and goals.

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

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

*Reference page:* 76

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

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

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

*Reference page:* 109

***Continuous Action:***

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

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

*Time frame:* Continuous action

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

*Reference page:* 110

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

*Time frame:* Continuous action

*Potential institutional partner(s):* as appropriate

*Reference page:* Partnering Opportunities 116

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

*Associated action step (Local):* Prepare Historic Landmark Applications for appropriate sites for local Landmark



designation by the City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission.

**Associated action step (State/Federal):** Prepare a historic context statement for a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Listing and applications for individual sites such as Oakwood Cemetery, the Colt House, the Colt Block, and the Jerauld House, under Criteria A and C.

**Time frame:** Continuous action

**Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission; NYSOPRHP; National Parks Service; Preservation League of New York State; National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Reference page:** 81

**4. Pursue formal recognition by the National Parks Service’s Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program for individual sites as appropriate.**

**Associated action step:** Prepare Underground Railroad Network to Freedom applications for the Ferry Landing (Prospect Point) and Suspension Bridge.

**Time frame:** Continuous action

**Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission; National Parks Service

**Reference page:** 99

**5. Organize and support further research into key Underground Railroad topics related specifically to Niagara Falls.**

**Associated action step:** Support and seek funding for additional research regarding the following topics: Jerauld House; Cataract House guest registry; African-American hotel workers; the African-American community in Niagara Falls; local Underground Railroad incidents.

**Time frame:** Continuous action

**Potential institutional partner(s):** Niagara University; Niagara Community College; New York Historical Research Associates; NYSOPRHP; City of Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission; Preservation League of New York State; NPS Network to Freedom; Niagara County Historical Society

**Reference page:** 79

**6. Review all Heritage Area related projects in light of local and regional plans and studies, such as the City of Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan, Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and Niagara Falls Core City Urban Renewal Plan.**

**Time frame:** Continuous action

**Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls Division of Planning and Development, Office of Economic

Development, Urban Renewal Agency; Niagara County Center for Economic Development; Empire State Development; USA Niagara Development Corporation

**Reference page:** 11

**7. Pursue alternative full or partial ownership options for individual sites as appropriate and as they become available.**

**Associated action step:** Identify priority properties for purchase and rehabilitation.

**Associated action step:** Identify priority properties for façade easements or other forms of preservation easement.

**Associated action step:** Match project with funding source, track funding schedule and apply for appropriate funding.

**Time frame:** Continuous action

**Potential institutional partner(s):** City of Niagara Falls; NYSOPRHP; funding sources (see Table 8: Potential Funding Sources)

**Reference page:** 83



### 8. Assess marketing efforts on a periodic basis using consistent and relevant measures.

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

**Time frame:** Continuous action

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

**Reference page:** 126

## Conclusion

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

As straightforward as some of that work may seem, those involved in the daily operation of the Heritage Area should never lose sight of its value and significance. At the heart of this initiative is a story that needs to be told to a community, and a nation, that needs to hear it. The local and national histories of slavery, the Underground Railroad, and abolitionism transcend divisions of race, class, geography, and time. This shared heritage cannot be relegated to trivial sections of forgotten grade school textbooks; it must instead be respected

as a stark and telling reminder of who we are as a people. We may be an imperfect reflection of our perfect founding ideals, but in that reflection we can see not only the darkness of our intolerance but also the light of our humanity. The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area recognizes that humanity through the narrative of the freedom seekers that gathered here so many generations ago, and will continue to celebrate it for the remarkable national treasure that it is.

